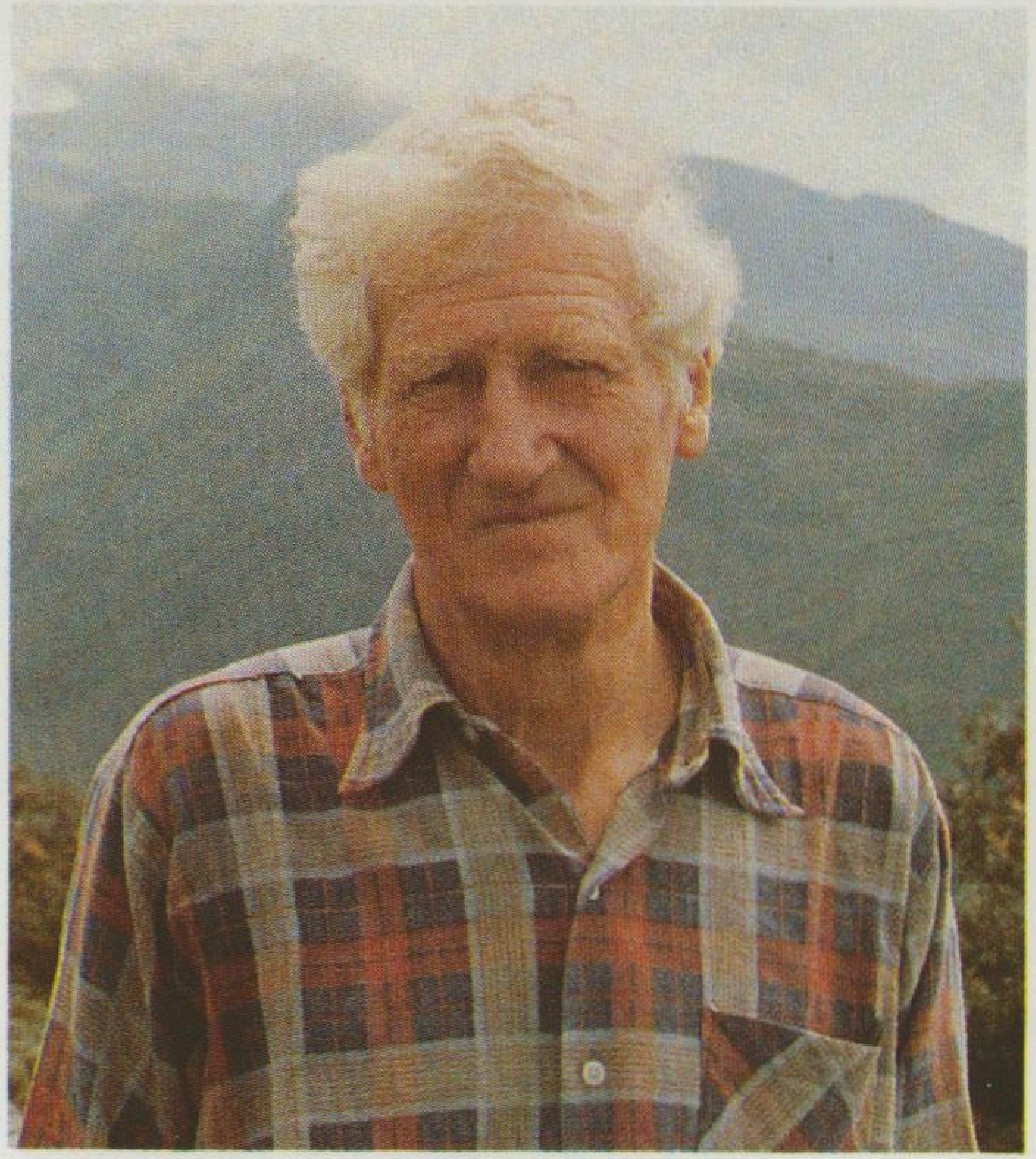

PG tips
Unexplained mysteries
of the World



THE LORD HUNT of Llanfair Waterdine, KG, CBE, DSO, is most famous for leading the successful British Everest Expedition which conquered Mount Everest, the world's highest peak, in June 1953. This followed a distinguished military career and linked up with his love of mountaineering and skiing.

Lord Hunt has many varied achievements to his credit, including being the inspiration and founder of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and its Director for ten years (1956-66); serving as President of the Council for Volunteers Overseas (1968-74) and as Chief Executive of the National Association of Youth Clubs from 1975 until June 1986.

Lord Hunt has himself encountered 'the unexplained' on several occasions – he first found evidence of the Yeti in the Himalayas in 1937 and again in 1978 when he found and photographed fresh Yeti tracks at dusk on the slopes of Everest. Shortly after, whilst sheltering for the night in a Sherpa's hut, he heard the Yeti's strange cry.

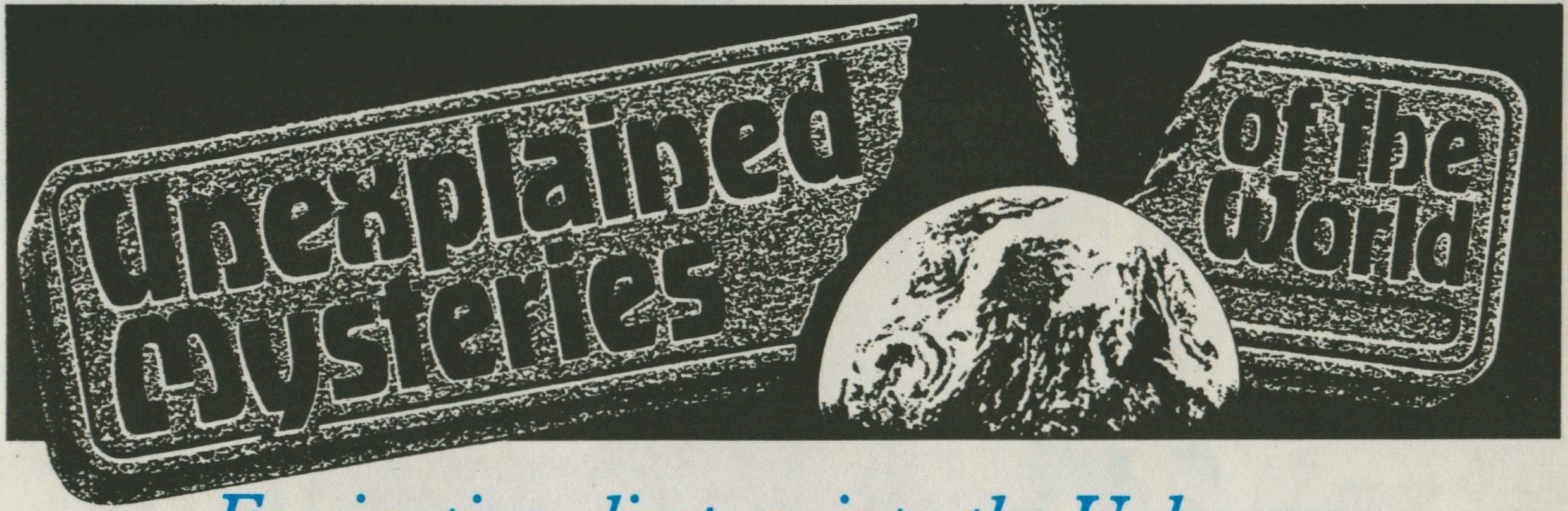
"It is in man's nature to seek answers to unsolved questions; indeed, it is vital to our survival as a race that we should pursue this quest for knowledge.

But knowledge needs to be attended by a sense of wonder, of uncertainty about the answers to all our questions. We need to be reminded how small and fragile is all life on Earth in the vastness of the universe. Too much knowledge can make us arrogant; so over-confidence needs to be tempered by humility.

This sense of wonder is certainly reflected in many of the strange mysteries featured in this picture card series. Some are truly exciting and all can stimulate our imagination. Take the Yeti, for instance, of which I have found clear evidence on a number of my journeys in the Himalayas. It is worth remembering that the mountain gorilla, the giant panda and other creatures were only rumoured to exist until about 100 years ago. So it may be with the Loch Ness Monster, for there have been a number of reports of similar creatures, as you will see in this collection.

I hope that you will enjoy this mixture of curious facts and feel intrigued by the questions they raise. We would all like to know the answers but I rather hope, at the end of the day, some mysteries will still remain, as much as for our sake as for the conservation of nature itself. I am thankful that, in man's journey into space, there will always be countless millions of stars he will never reach."

John Hunt



Fascinating glimpses into the Unknown, at the frontiers of knowledge and experience

Written by Robert J. M. Rickard

Devised and produced by David Leon

ROBERT RICKARD, freelance writer, editor and researcher, has been interested in unexplained mysteries ever since he avidly read science fiction as a boy. After attaining a Bachelor of Arts Degree and a Higher Diploma in Design, Robert Rickard became founder/editor of *Fortean Times*, a quarterly international journal of strange phenomena and which he still edits after 13 years. He is co-author of three popular books covering the spectrum of mysteries: *Phenomena* (1977), *Photographs of the Unknown* (1980) and *Living Wonders* (1982). He is also founder of the Archives for Fortean Research, which aims to preserve and record unexplained data for future scholars.

Ancient Stone Circles





Stonehenge's builders arranged the huge stones to allow the calculation of astronomical events important to them, like Midsummer's day.

1. Rings of Stone

There are more than 900 stone circles in Britain, built between 3000 and 1200 BC. Though most are ruined, a few have survived, like the most famous of all, Stonehenge. Very little is known about the builders and their purpose, but painstaking work by adventurous archaeologists has shown that the rings have a complicated geometry. Marker stones or prominent natural features were used additionally to compute astronomical events, like eclipses.

Our photograph shows Callanish circle on the Isle of Lewis. Dating back to about 2000 BC, it is one of Britain's most beautiful megalithic sites. This superb picture was taken at a mid-summer sunrise with a spectacular solar halo.



16th-century Prophet

2. Nostradamus

Michel de Nostredame (1503-1566) was a physician, counsellor and astrologer to two French kings. He is better known as Nostradamus, whose prophesies have tantalised every generation since 1555.

His complex four-line verses, filled with vague allusions and plays on words, are drawn from at least seven languages. They are said to foretell momentous events like the Great Fire of London, the rise of the French Republic, World War I, the rise of Hitler and Mussolini, and the end of the world in 2000 AD.

One prophecy was very specific. Nostradamus gave the exact circumstances of his death, including who would find him and where. It came true.





Mystery Spheres of Stone





3. Costa Rica's Giant Spheres

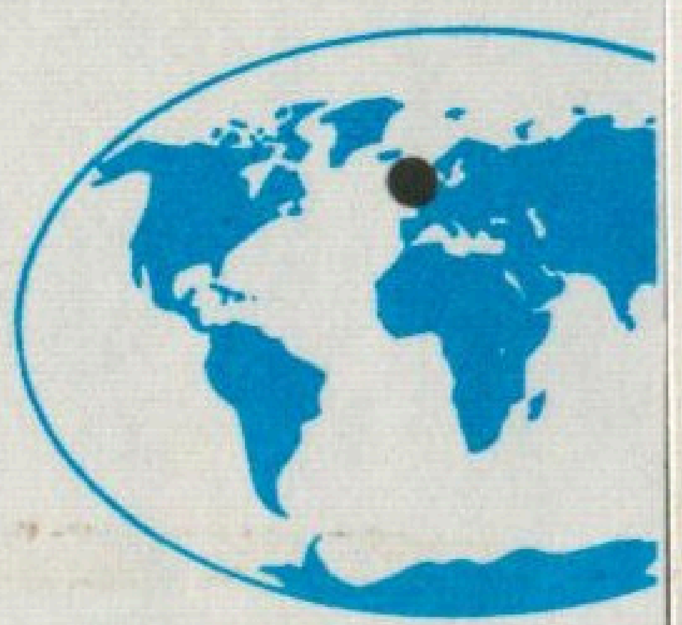
The mysterious giant granite spheres of Costa Rica were first studied in the 1940s by American archaeologist, Dr Samuel Lothrop, of Harvard University. They were originally found in the 1930s when a forest was cleared for a banana plantation. At least four centuries old, they range from a few centimetres in diameter to over two metres and some weigh over 16 tonnes.

Many of them are almost perfectly smooth, obviously man-made by skilled artisans using templates. Who made the spheres, and why, remains an unsolved mystery.



Dr Samuel Lothrop and his wife with one of the biggest stone spheres.

Entombed Alive





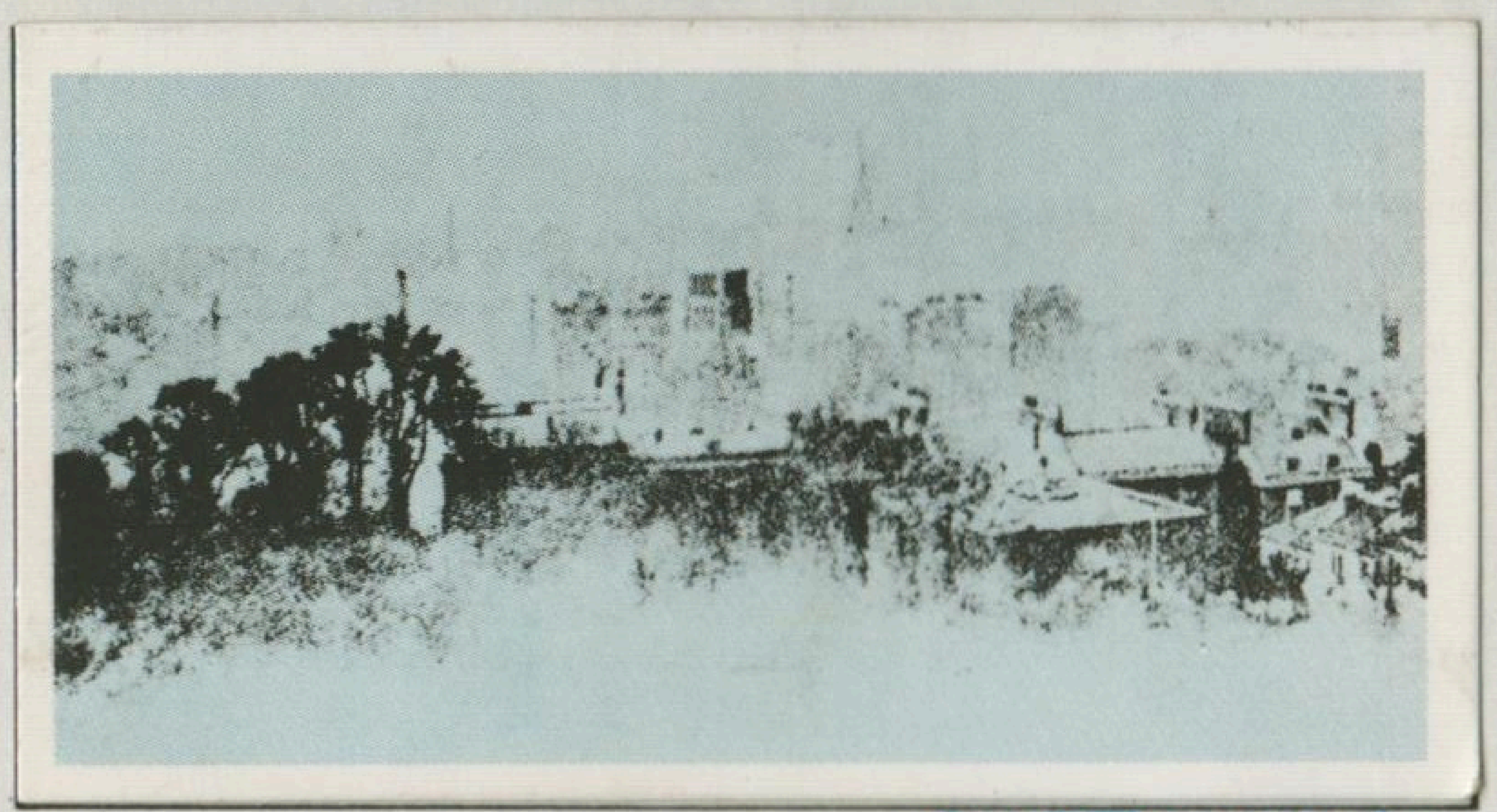
4. Toad in the Hole

This toad was found inside a sealed, hollow flint nodule in 1900, when quarrymen near Lewes, Sussex, cracked it open. Its mummified body and the parts of its tomb can be seen in the Booth Museum, Brighton.

While this particular animal was found dead, there are many well-documented cases of freshly-quarried stones broken open to reveal a living toad in a close-fitting hole, with no apparent way in. If the stone formed around the toad, how could it survive millions of years without sustenance, or withstand the heat and terrible pressure necessary to create rocks?

Alaska's Phantom City

5. Cities in the Sky





It is a fact that 19th-century pioneers in Alaska regularly saw the image of a city in the sky which they believed was our city of Bristol, over 2500 miles distant. The mirage appeared every summer on the great glacier of Mount Fairweather. The Alaskan Indians knew of this phantom city before the white settlers came, calling it the 'City in the Clouds'.

This photograph, published in 1887, purports to be that of the Bristol mirage taken by a famous pioneer named Willoughby. One historian identified the distinctive buildings including the spire of St Mary Redcliffe.

Puzzling Tracks

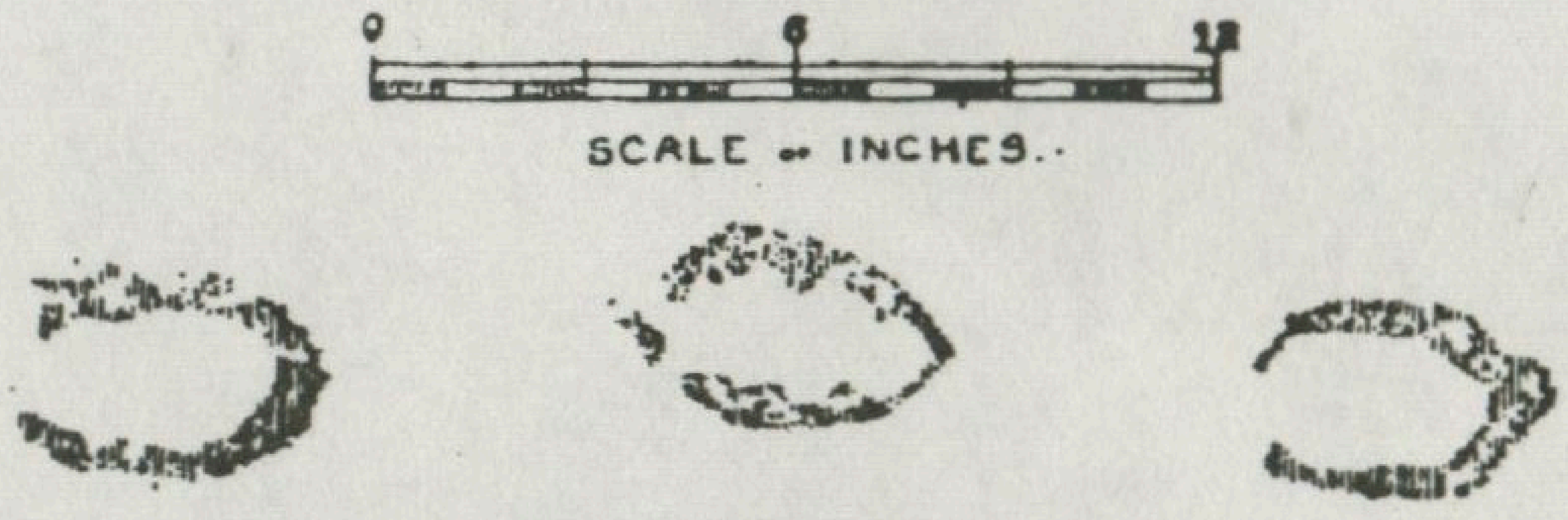


6. The Devil's Hoofprints

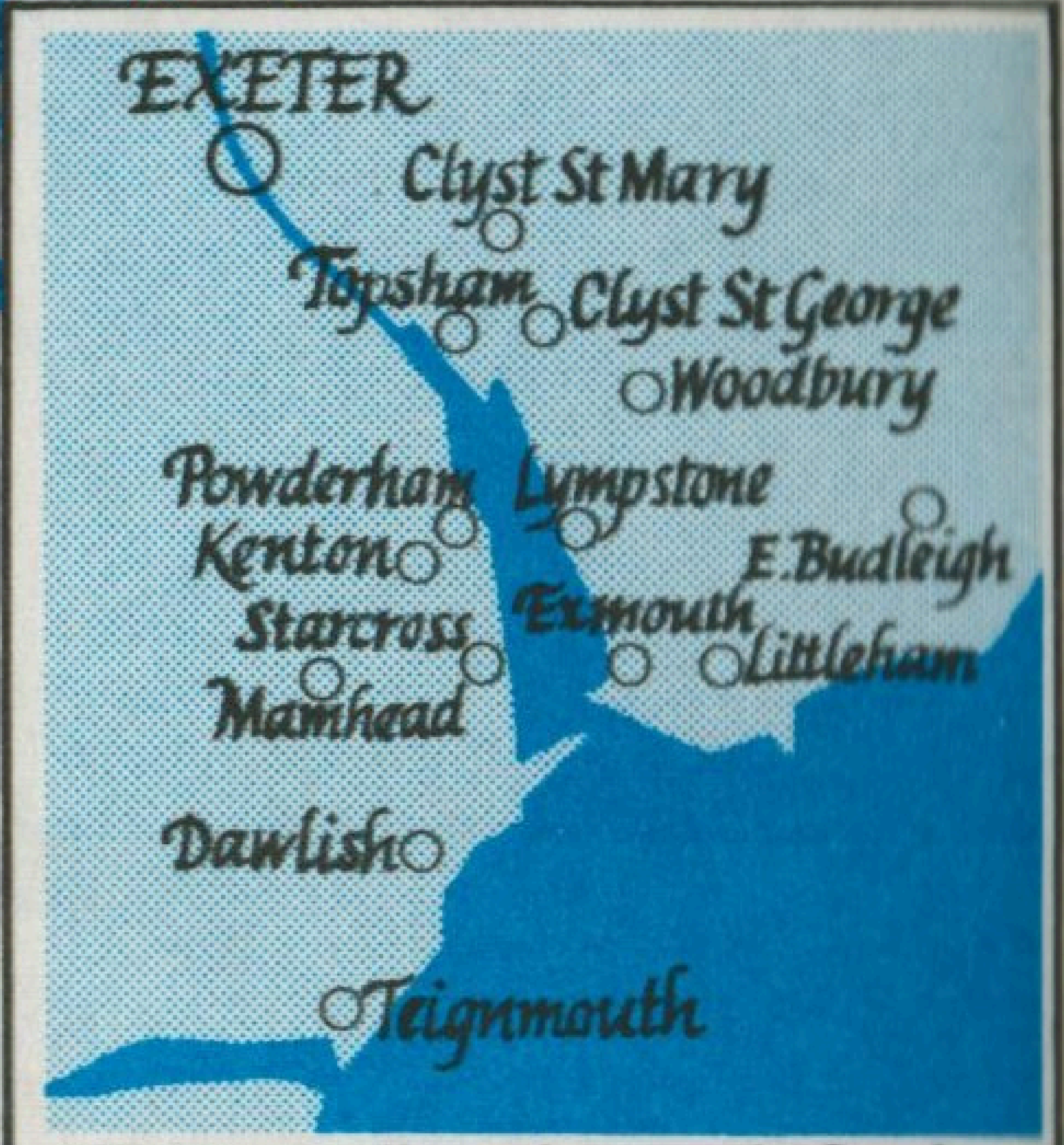
One of the world's great mysteries happened on 9th February 1855, and has never been satisfactorily explained. That morning, residents of several towns in South Devon woke to find a single line of tracks in the deep overnight snow.

The mysterious tracks meandered for over 100 miles around Dawlish. They were found in such inaccessible places as enclosed courtyards, over roofs, haystacks, even on tops of narrow walls. They also crossed open fields and at one point jumped the River Exe. Although shaped like the prints of a hoofed animal, their arrangement was that of a two-legged creature. Many frightened locals believed the Devil himself had tramped their countryside.



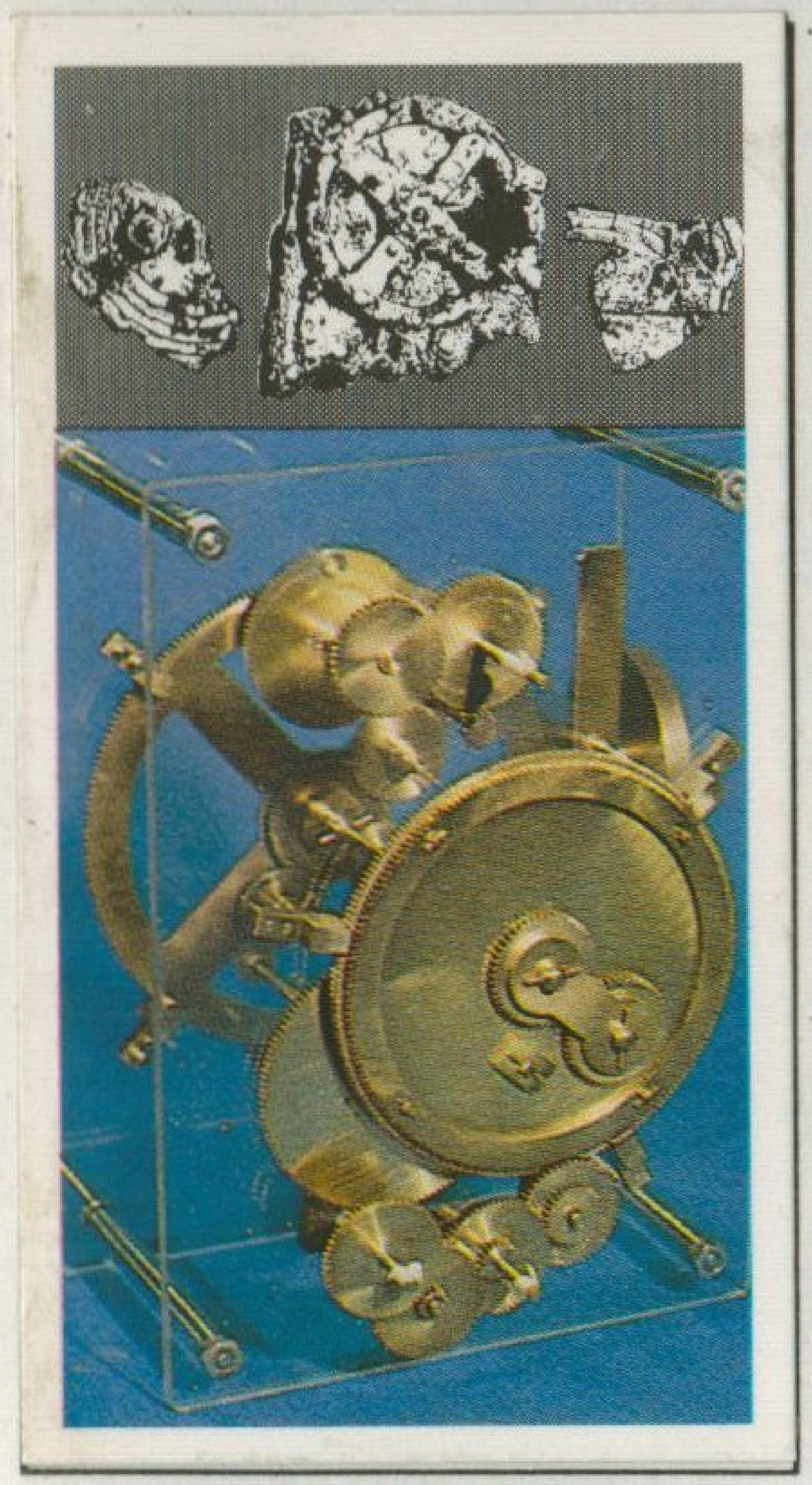


This illustration, from an eye-witness, shows the scale and peculiar shape of the prints.



This map shows the area, in South Devon, where the tracks were found.

Ancient Technology



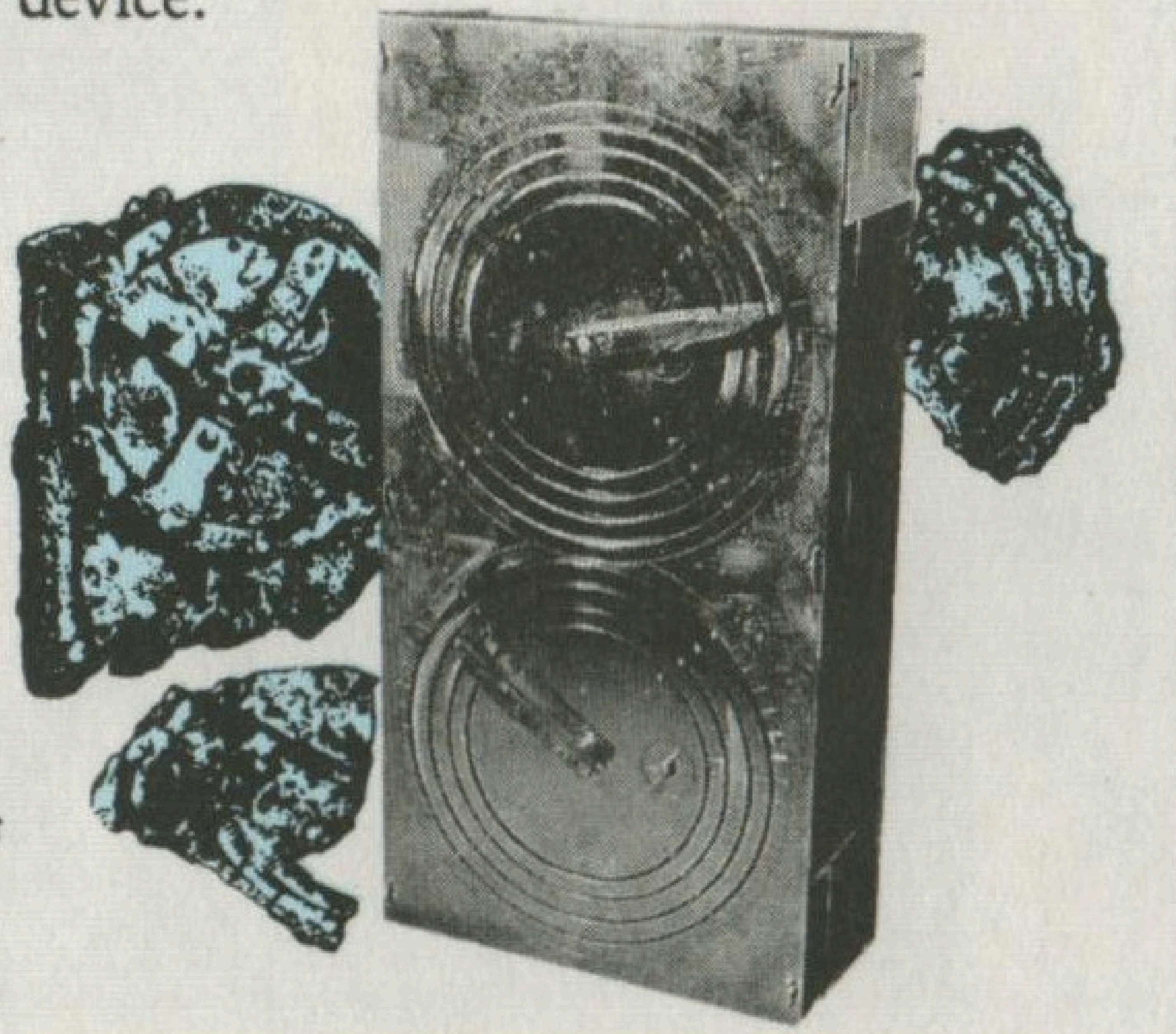
7. An Ancient Greek Computer

In 1900, fragments of encrusted bronze, dated to the first century BC, were recovered from an ancient shipwreck off the island of Antikythera, near Crete. In 1958, science historian, Dr Derek de Solla Price, recognized the importance of the discovery. X-rays of the fragments revealed a system of over 20 gearwheels and engraved scales. He deduced that here was an ancient mechanical computing device used to work out the motions of the sun, moon and planets.

Nothing like this 'computer' was to be seen in Europe until 1000 years later and there is no trace in ancient Greek records of such technology.

Our pictures show the original fragments together with a replica of the device.





The original encrusted fragments and a reconstruction of the Antikythera 'computer'.

El Dorado's Treasure





8. El Dorado – The Golden King

Legends of the Colombian Andes tell of a Chibcha chieftain covered in gold dust who would ritually jump into the waters of Lake Guatavita, followed by offerings of gold or jewels. Spanish Conquistadores called the chieftain king 'El Dorado' – the gilded one. The legends have prompted many treasure-hunting expeditions over the centuries; there was even an attempt to drain the lake, but it failed.

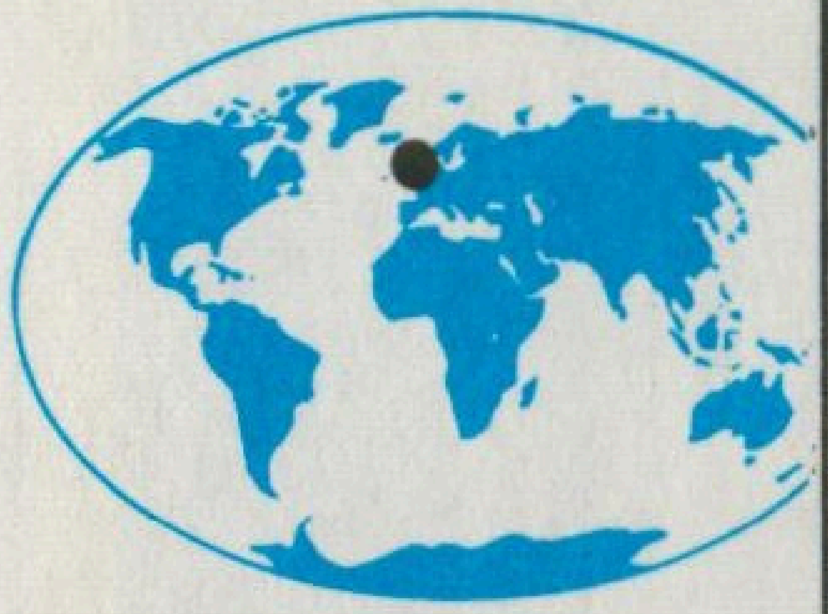
Twenty years ago a pure gold model raft, complete with golden king, was found in a cave nearby, giving new life to the stories of 'El Dorado's' treasure. To this day it remains a mystery what lies in Guatavita's unknown depths.



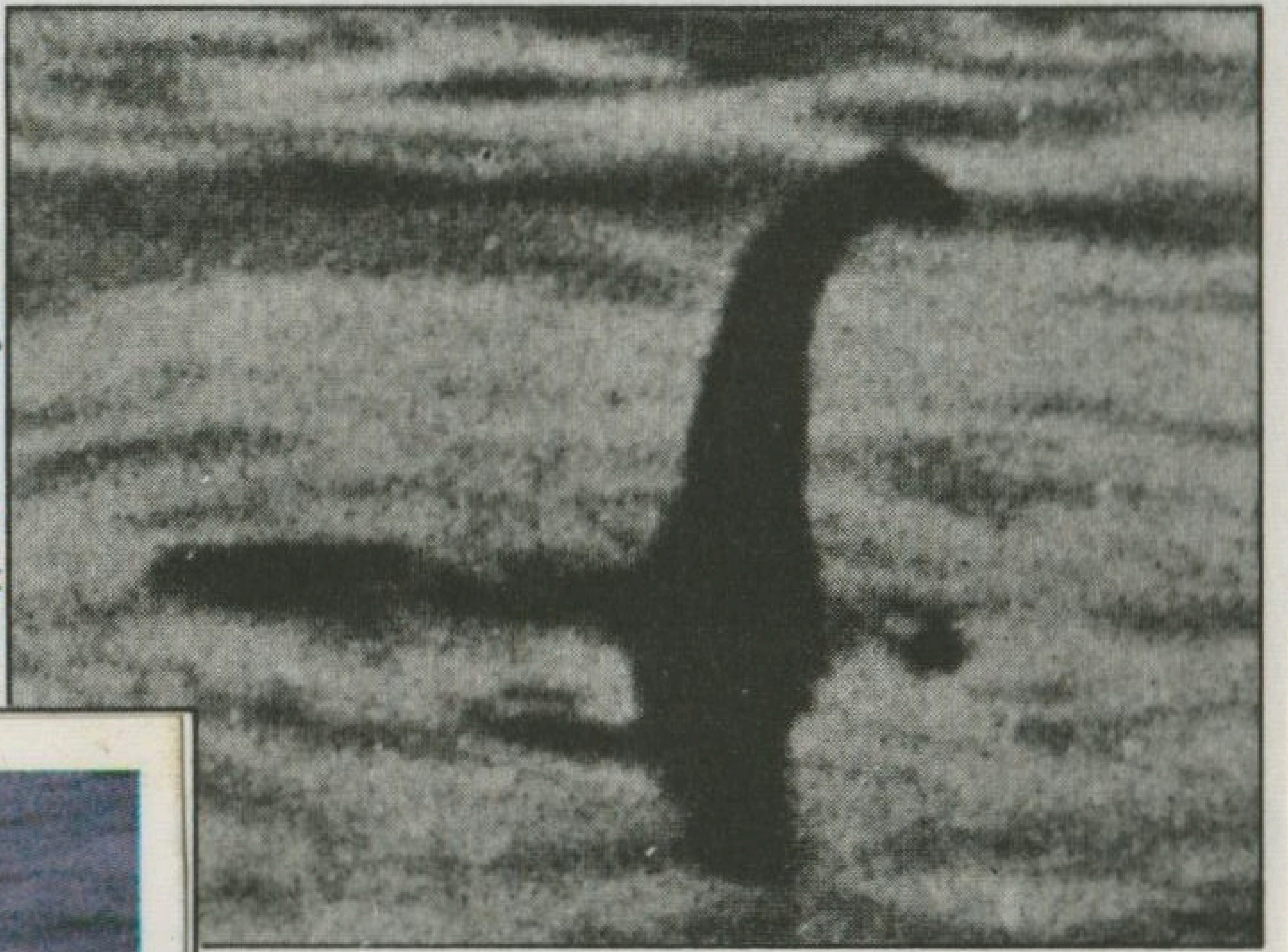
This solid gold model raft with a 'king' figure, found near the lake, is one of the most valuable archaeological treasures in the world.

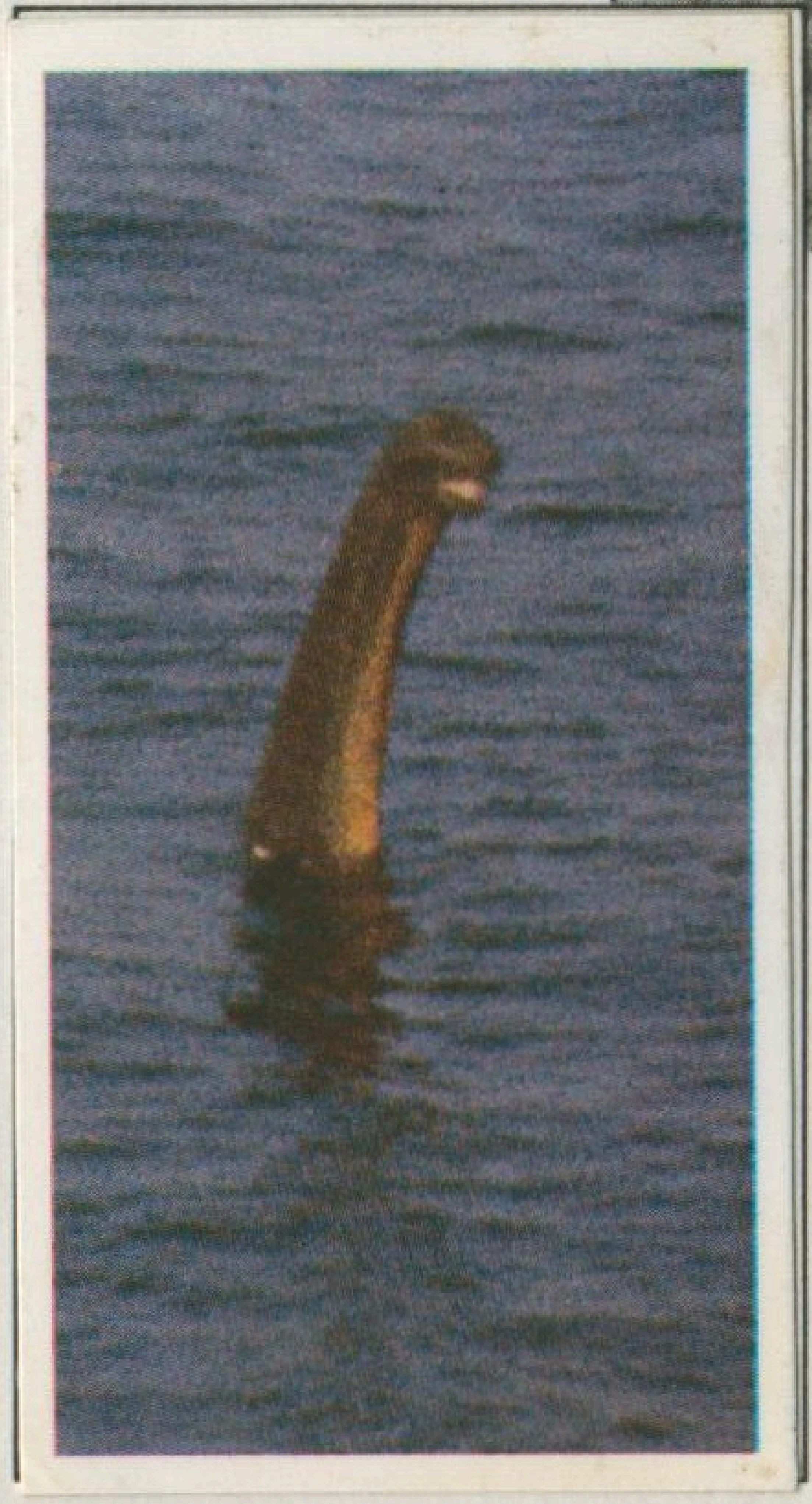


Elusive Monsters . . .



The Loch Ness Monster, photographed in April 1934 by a London doctor, R. Kenneth Wilson.





9. The Loch Ness Monster

Although legends of a monstrous animal lurking in the dark peat-stained waters of Loch Ness date back to AD 565, the modern era of sightings began in 1933. Since then, there have been hundreds of reported sightings and a few photographs. In 1975, a creature was detected by sonar and underwater cameras, leading naturalist Sir Peter Scott to name it *Nessiteras rhombopteryx* or 'the Ness monster with diamond-shaped fins'.

This photograph of 'Nessie', as she is better known, was taken on the morning of 21st May 1977, by Anthony Shiels, from the grounds of Urquhart Castle.

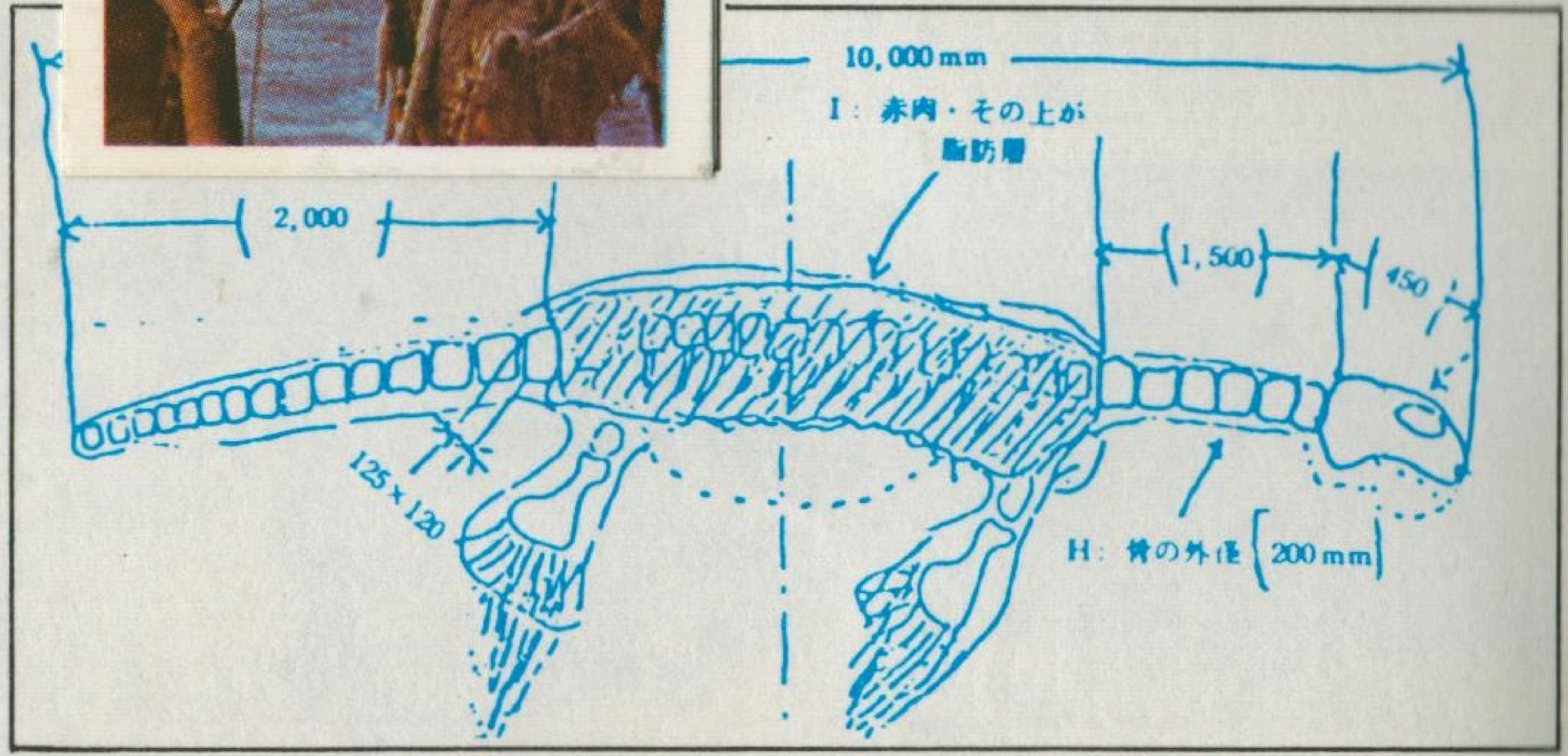


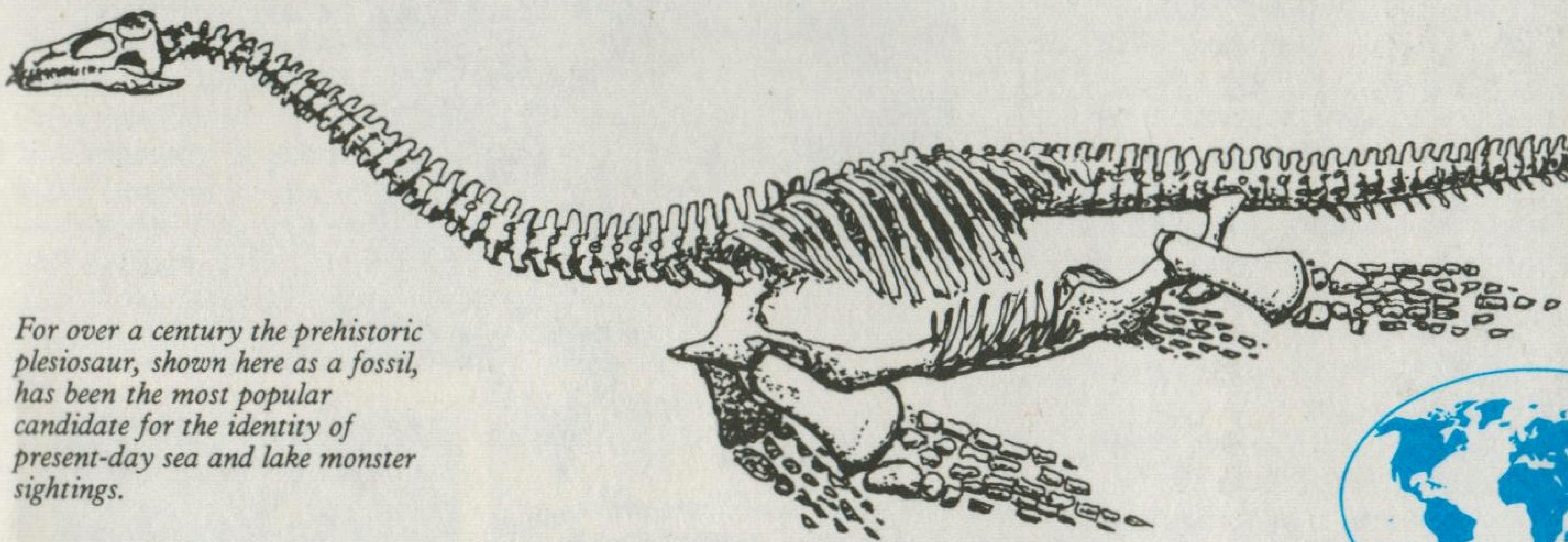
10. A Strange Sea Monster

In April 1977, a Japanese fishing vessel, trawling near New Zealand, netted a strange carcase. The 10 metre-long plesiosaur-like animal was dead and had been attacked by predators. It smelled so badly that the crew had to throw it overboard. A scientific symposium in Tokyo later failed to identify samples of the unknown marine giant.

We do not know what undiscovered large animals still exist in the vast ocean deeps. According to Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans (the leading expert in the subject) sea monster sightings still occur at a rate of about two a year.

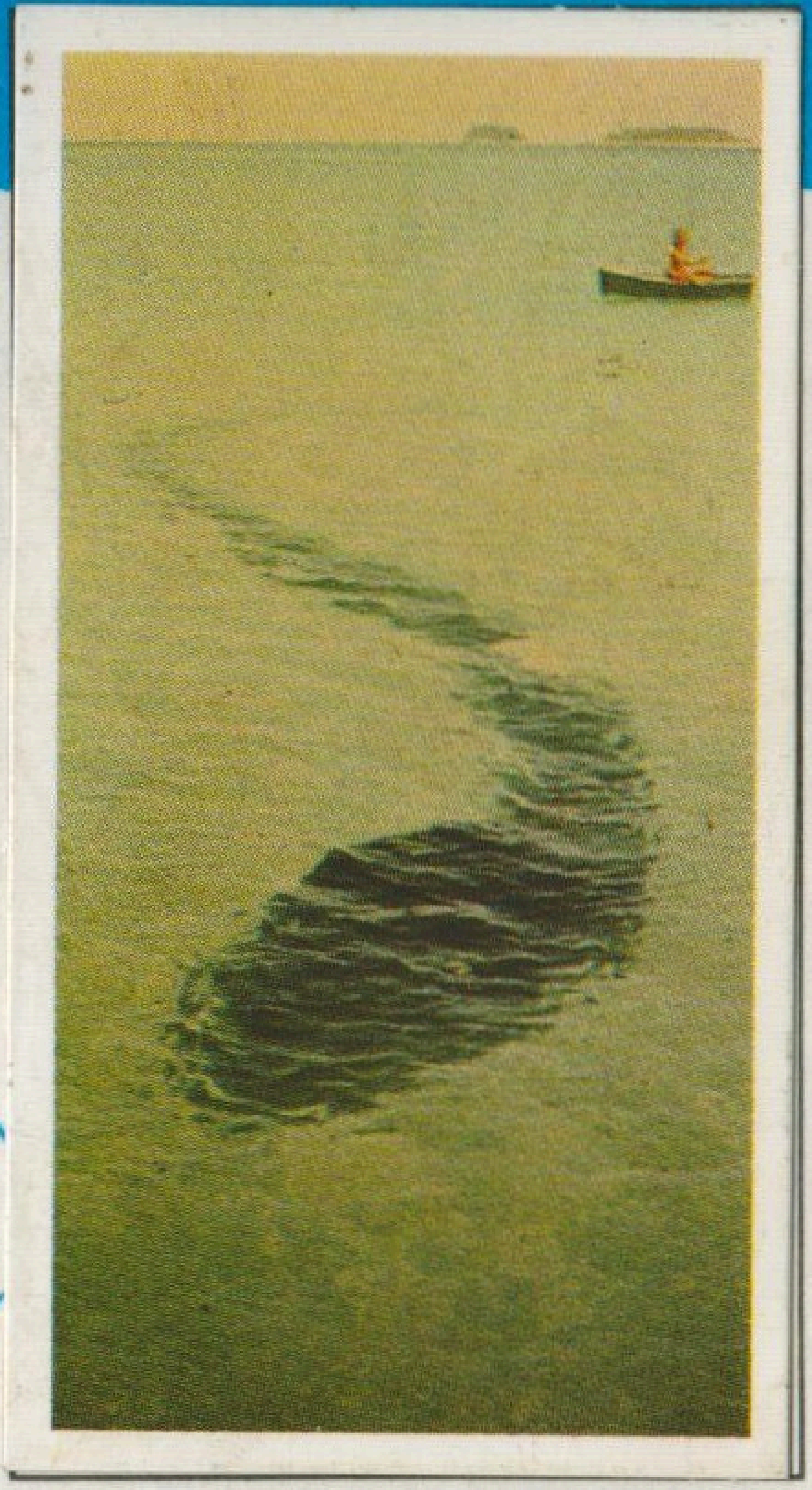
A drawing of the skeleton of the unknown sea monster, by one of the Japanese crew. Samples of tissue were taken but were too decomposed for identification.

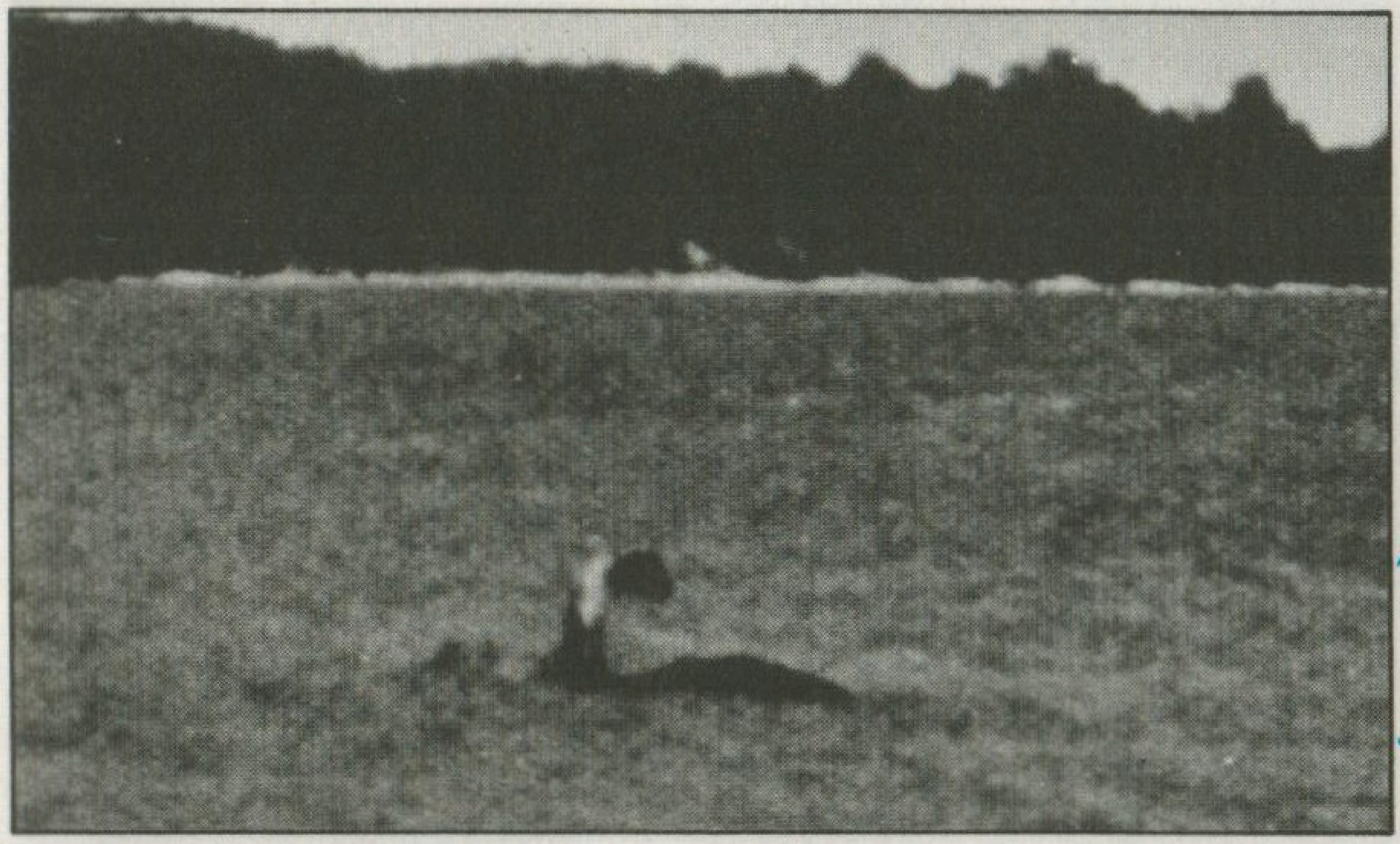




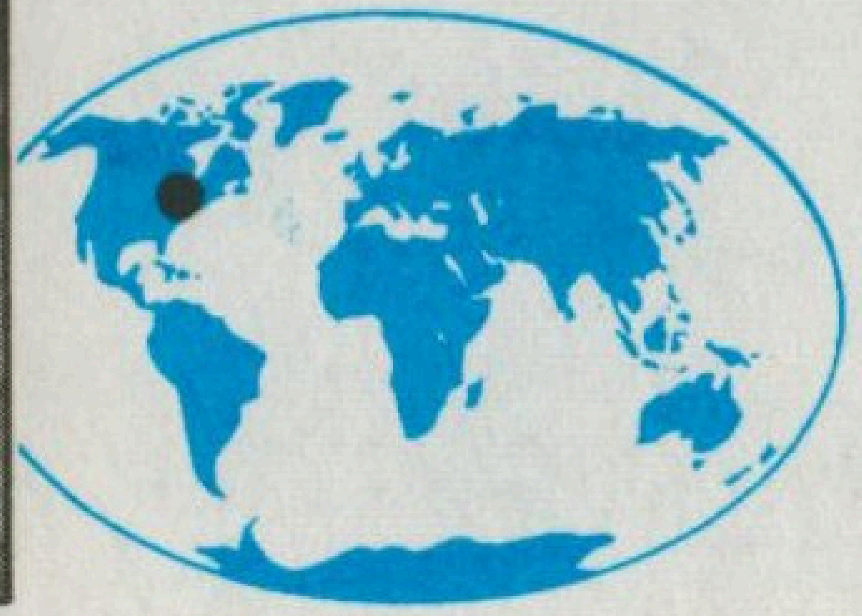
For over a century the prehistoric plesiosaur, shown here as a fossil, has been the most popular candidate for the identity of present-day sea and lake monster sightings.







In July 1977, Sandra Mansi and her husband saw and photographed what they claim is the head, neck and back of a monster in Lake Champlain, New York State.



11. A Live Sea Monster

In December 1964, French adventurer Robert Le Serrec, sailing off Australia's Queensland coast with his family and friends, moored his yacht by Book Island. They were surprised to discover a huge tadpole-like creature resting in the warm shallow waters of a bay. Its snake-like head had two white eyes, and its brown-banded body tapered over 24 metres. A large white patch near the head looked like a wound, possibly made by a ship's propeller.

Le Serrec's photograph has been challenged by some experts, but he resolutely believes he stumbled across a sea-serpent recovering from a collision with a ship.

The Gods from Sirius

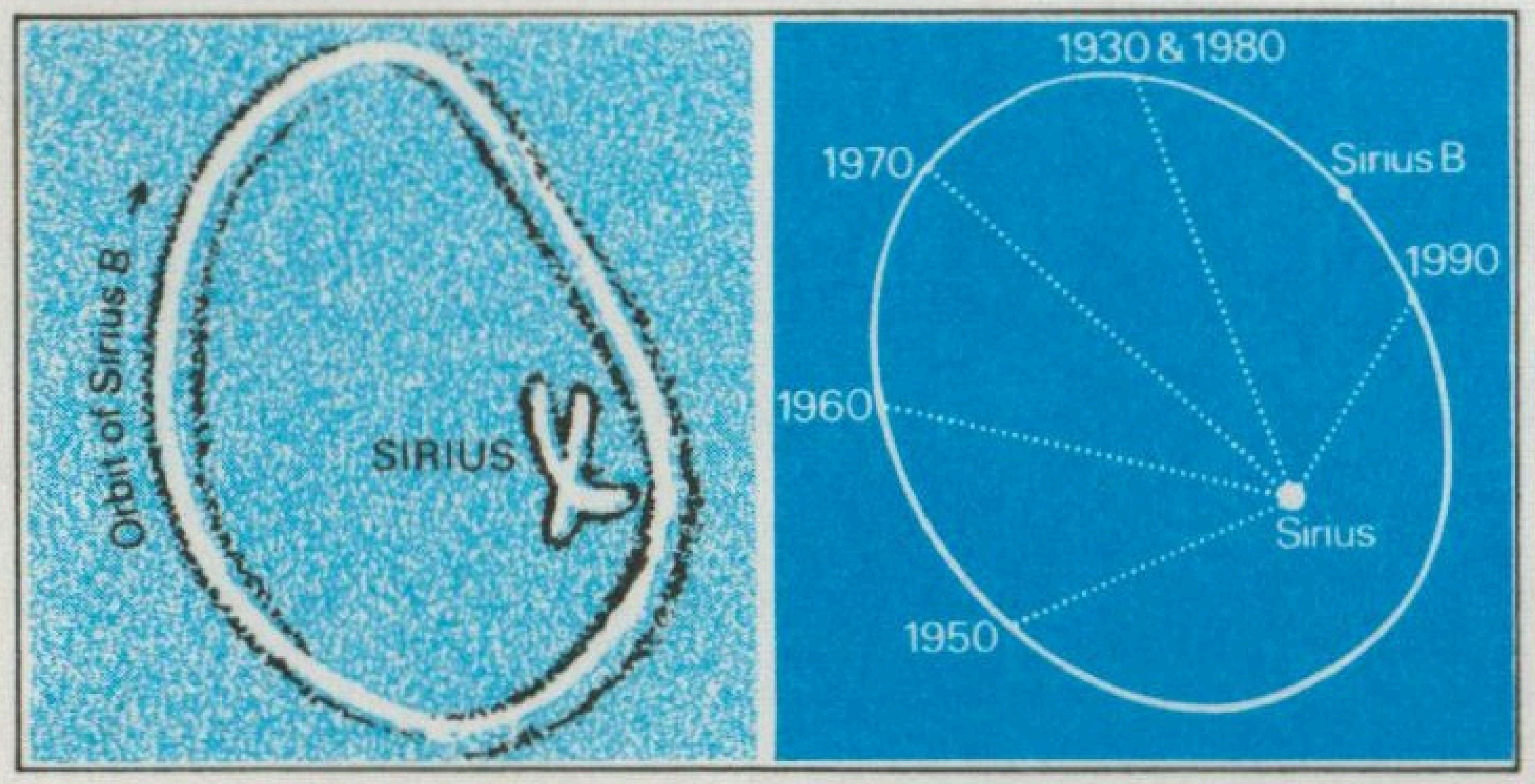




12. The Sirius Mystery

The Dogon tribe of Mali, in West Africa, have an ancient mythology featuring Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky. Unaided by telescopes, the Dogon believe that Sirius has two invisible companions: a light star with a near circular orbit, and a star that is 'heavier than all the material on earth', which orbits Sirius every 50 years.

In 1862, a white dwarf star, Sirius B, invisible to the unaided eye, was discovered orbiting Sirius. It is made of dense matter and has a 50-year orbit. The Dogon were correct – but how? They claim that in ancient times, god-like amphibious beings from Sirius visited this planet and told them.



A Dogon drawing (right) of the near-circular path of Sirius B around Sirius (the x-like mark) compared to an astronomer's diagram (far right) of the 50-year orbit.



Polish medium Stanislawa Tomczyk levitating scissors, seemingly by the power of her will.

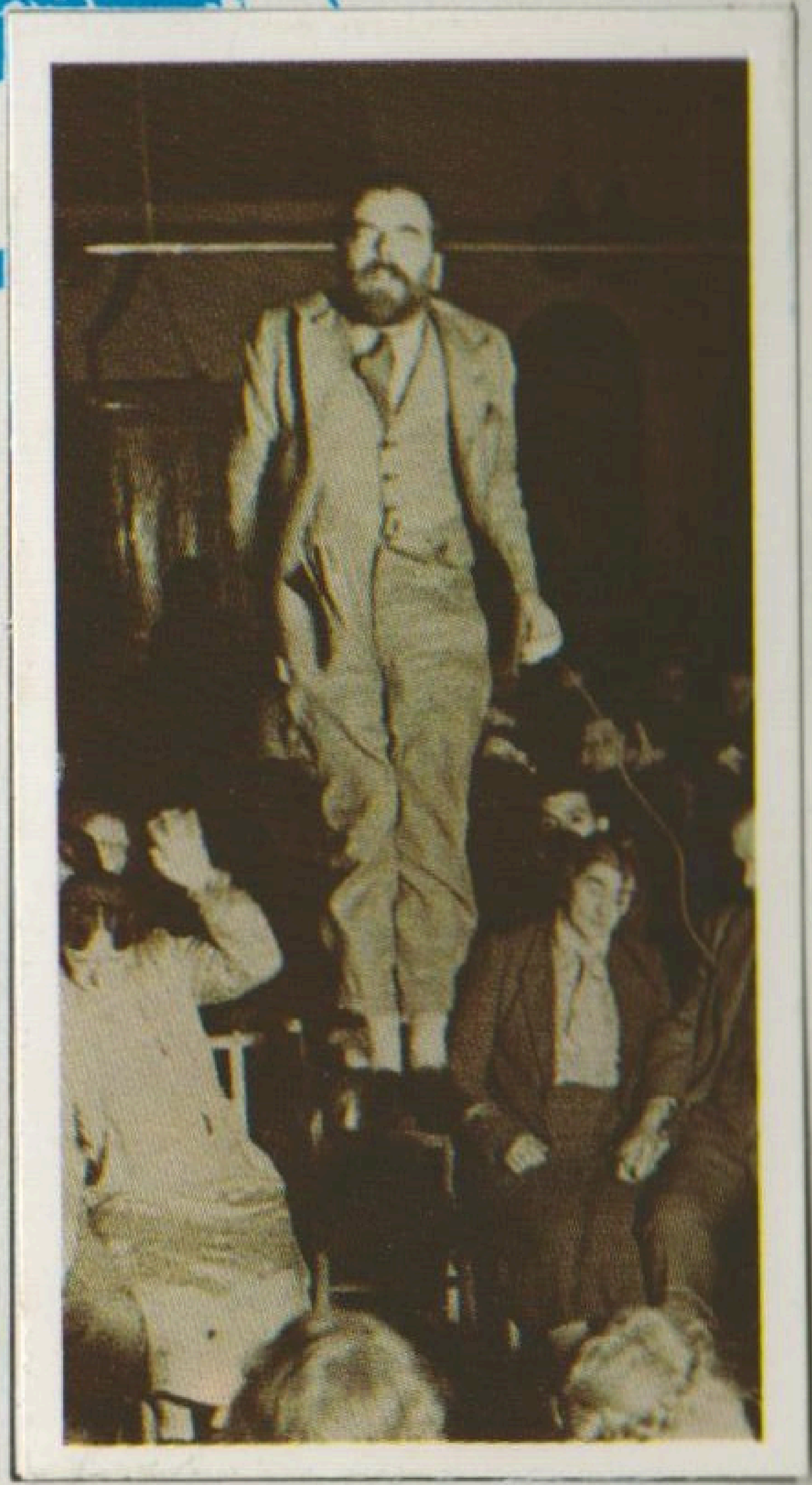


13. Levitation

Reliable records of human beings who have risen into the air and hovered there for a while go back at least to St Joseph of Copertino (1603-63) who made several well-witnessed flights over considerable distances.

Although one authority lists some 230 levitating saints, the phenomenon is not exclusively Christian, and similar experiences have been claimed by tribal wizards, witches, and spirit mediums among others.

Our illustration shows the medium, Colin Evans, photographed by infra red light during a seance in 1938. Comparison of several photos of this event shows that he remained in the air for some time.



Defying Gravity

14. The Indian Rope Trick

The famous 'rope trick' was ancient when Marco Polo saw it at the 13th-century court of Kubla Khan. The fakir – an Indian magician – hurls a rope into the air and his boy assistant climbs up and vanishes. The boy screams and his severed head crashes to the ground, to the horror of spectators. The fakir puts the head into a basket and out jumps the boy. Most critics dismiss this as a clever illusion, but the fakirs believe that a true master has a real ability to levitate and make people see hallucinations.

The 'fakir' in our photograph, 'Karachi' (Arthur Claude Derby) adapted the rope trick for Western audiences.

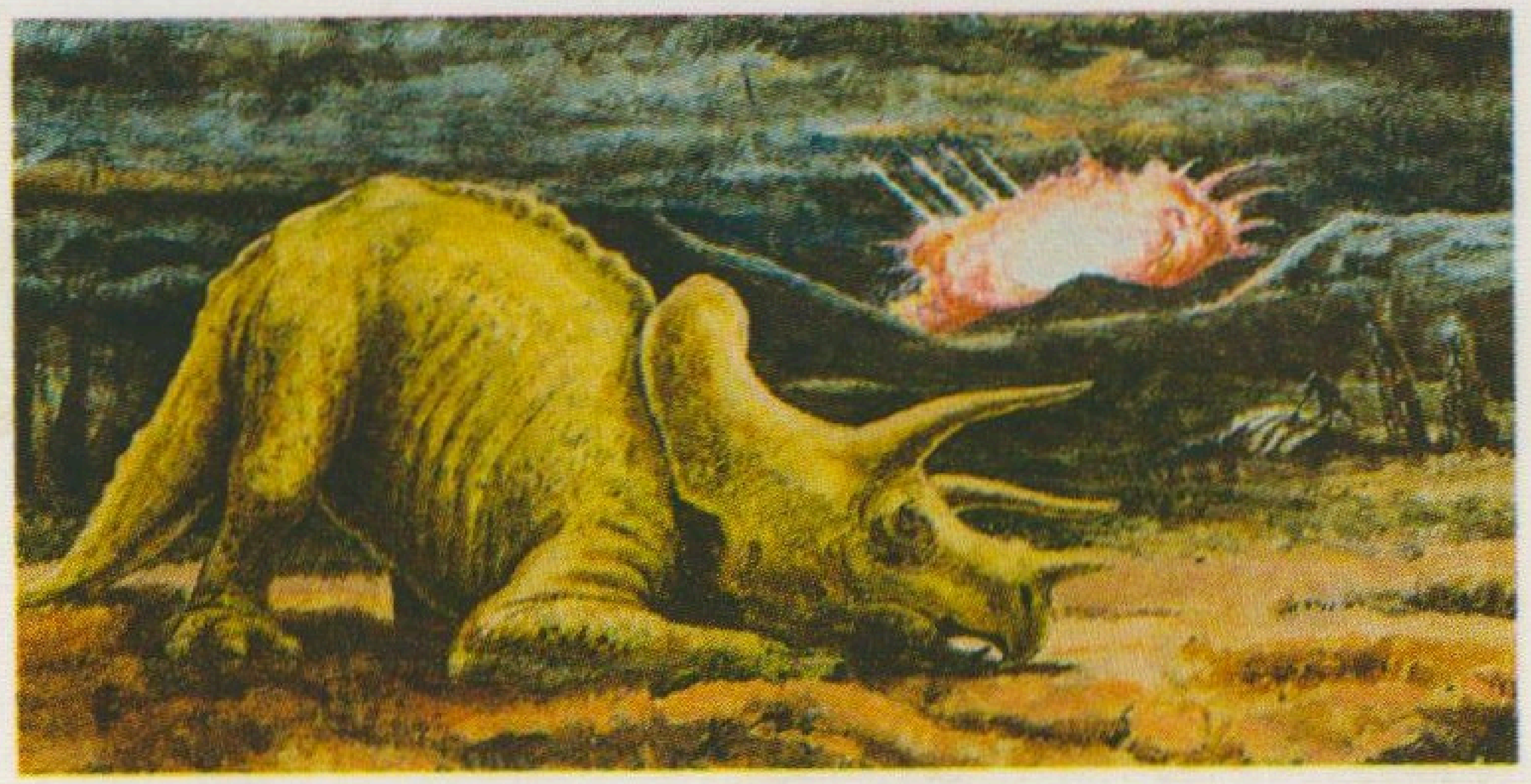






In 1936, Colonel P. T. Plunkett, an English tea-plantation manager, photographed a demonstration of levitation by an Indian fakir in Southern India. The fakir stayed in mid-air for four minutes lying horizontally above the ground.

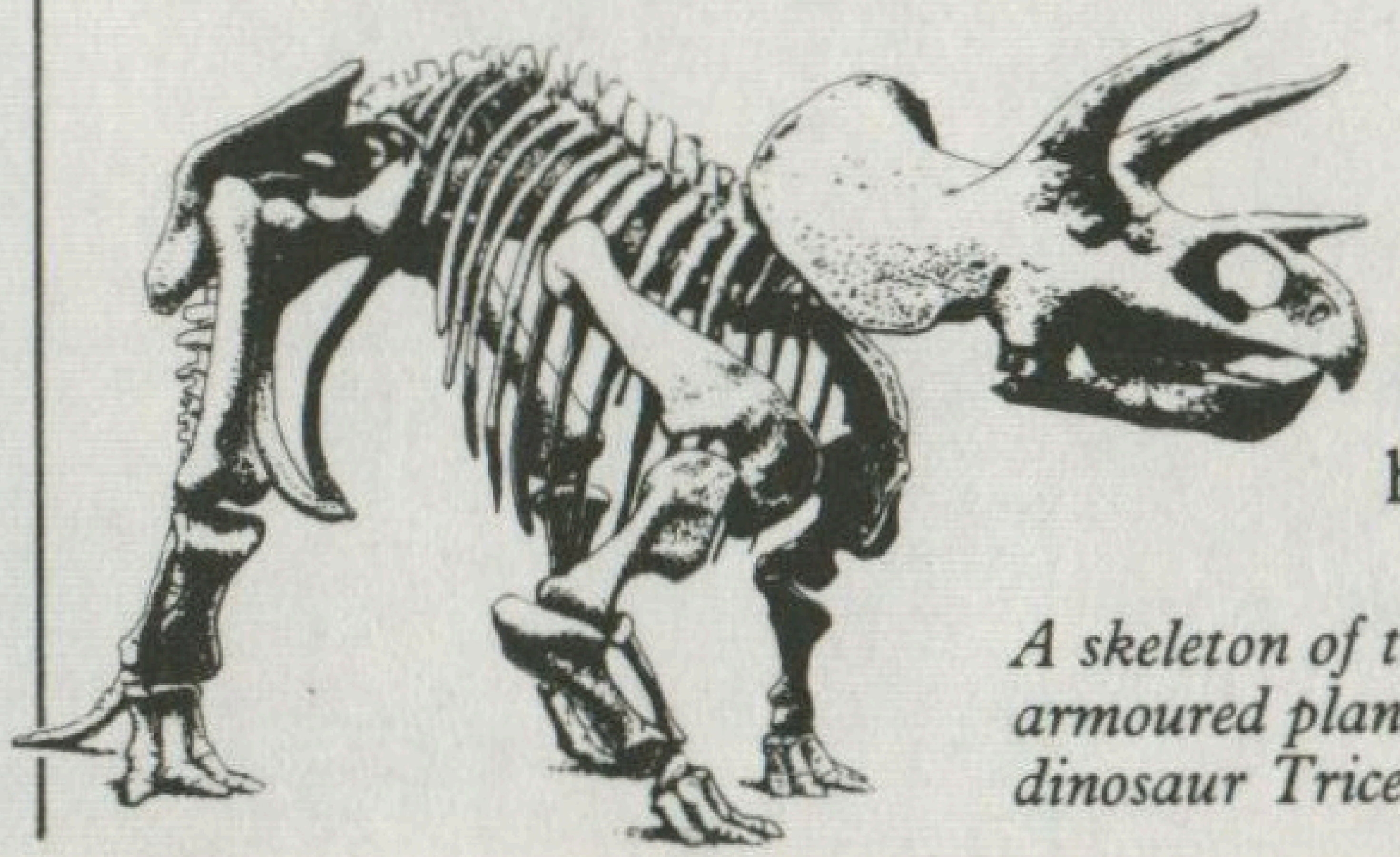
Prehistoric Extinctions



15. The Riddle of the Dinosaurs

Dinosaurs successfully dominated this planet for 160 million years. A few species died out naturally, but what caused their mass extinction? Tiny brains or clumsiness were not the cause. Many dinosaurs were agile and at least one species, experts suggest, was probably 'as intelligent as primitive man'.

The dinosaurs however, were not the only victims of an unknown catastrophe towards the end of the Mesozoic age, about 65 million years ago. One theory is that a massive meteorite strike, together with increased volcanic activity, darkened the skies with dust for centuries. In the gloom, most of the life-forms on Earth perished, including half of all plant life.



A skeleton of the huge armoured plant-eating dinosaur Triceratops.

The Shroud of Turin

16. The Shroud of Turin

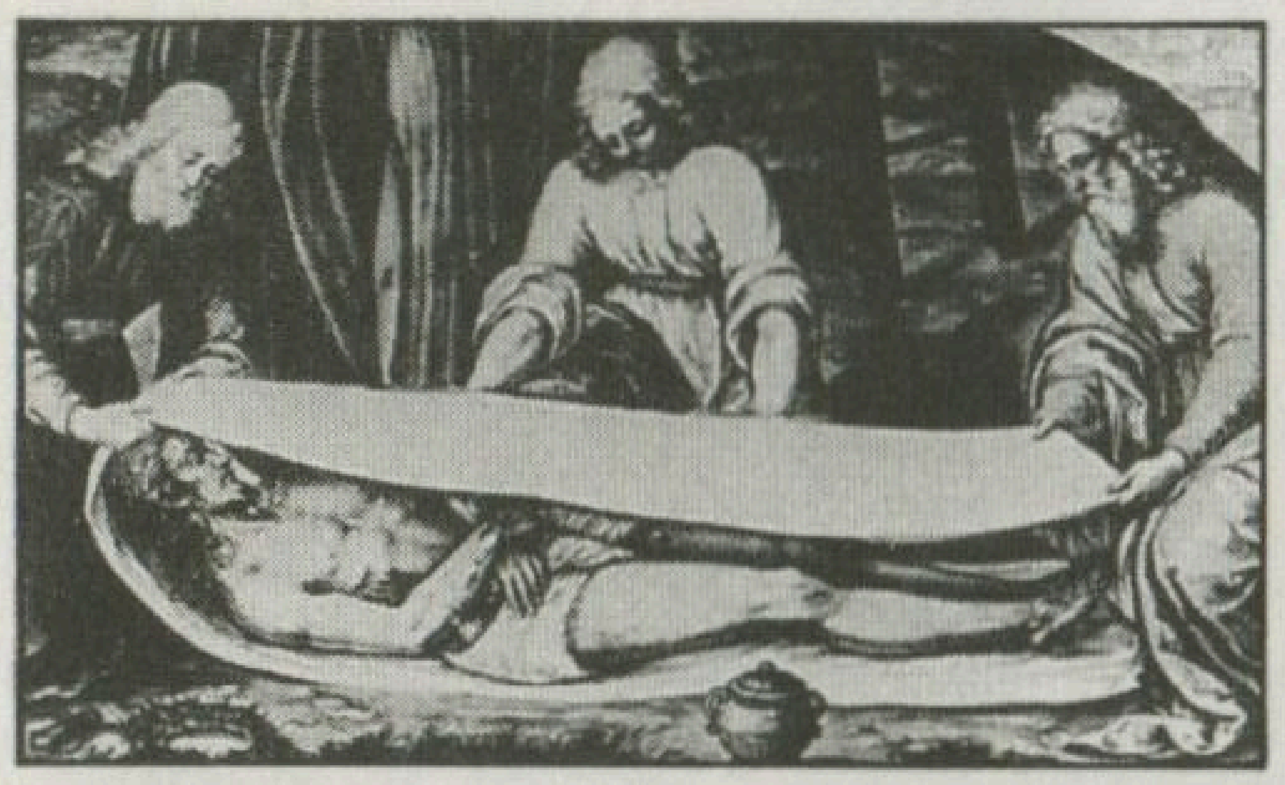
The venerated cloth now kept in Turin Cathedral is believed by many to have wrapped Jesus's body after the Crucifixion. When it was photographed for the first time in 1898, the negatives revealed a true 'photographic' image of a body.

Further investigation in 1973 revealed that the weave was similar to Syrian cloth of the first century, and pollens lodged in the fibres were of Palestinian origin. The wounds and blood-flow pattern corresponded correctly to Roman-style execution.

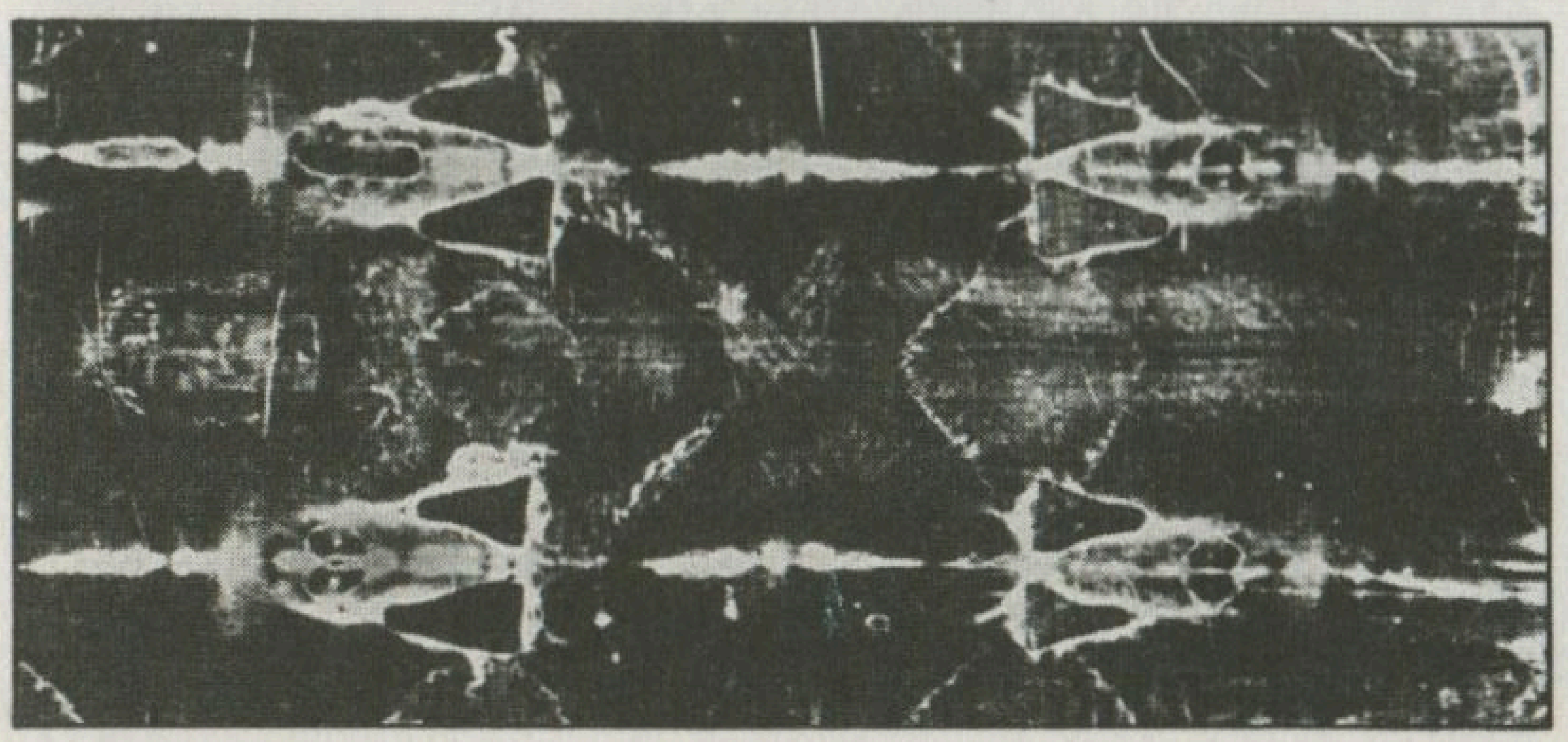
Strangest of all, the image had been *scorched* into the cloth. Whoever the man in the shroud was, something inexplicable had happened to him.







A 16th-century painting by G. B. della Rovere showing his conception of how the image came to be formed on the Shroud, the body being laid on one half of the cloth and the other half being wrapped over the head and down to the feet.



Scientists have discovered marks of whipping and execution accurately recorded on the Turin Shroud amid the signs of folding, fire damage (that nearly destroyed the Shroud in 1532) and repairs to the cloth itself.

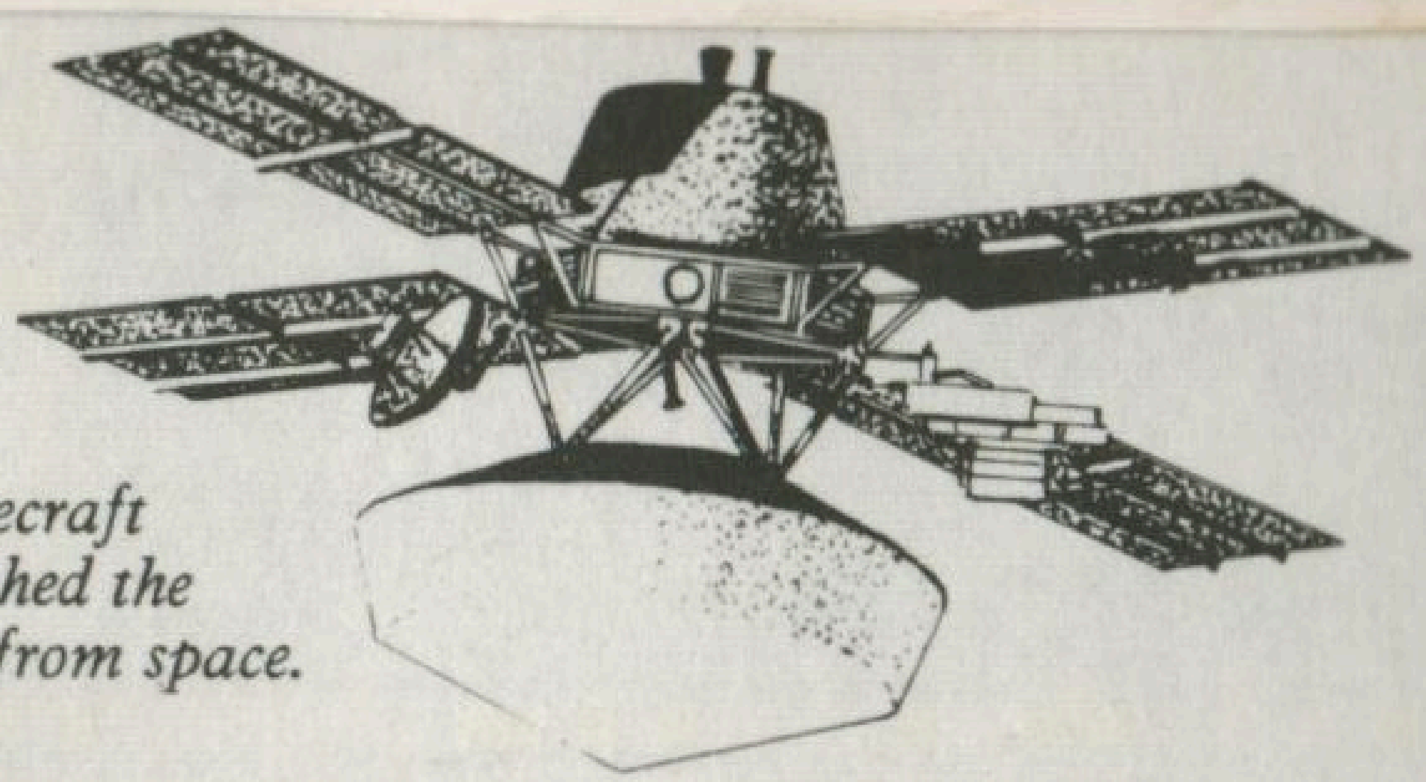
A Natural Portrait

17. The Martian Face

This astonishing picture of the Martian landscape was taken by the *Viking I* Orbiter, in July 1976, during a search for a landing site for *Viking 2*. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration assures us that it was not a giant alien artifact, but an *illusion* of a face, created by low-angled sunlight across a mountain-like feature about a mile across.

There are many instances of spontaneous images in nature: other examples are alphabet letters in animal markings; rocks shaped like human figures; and the extraordinary mimicry of some insects and plants. Are they merely coincidences or do they show an intelligent force shaping the universe?



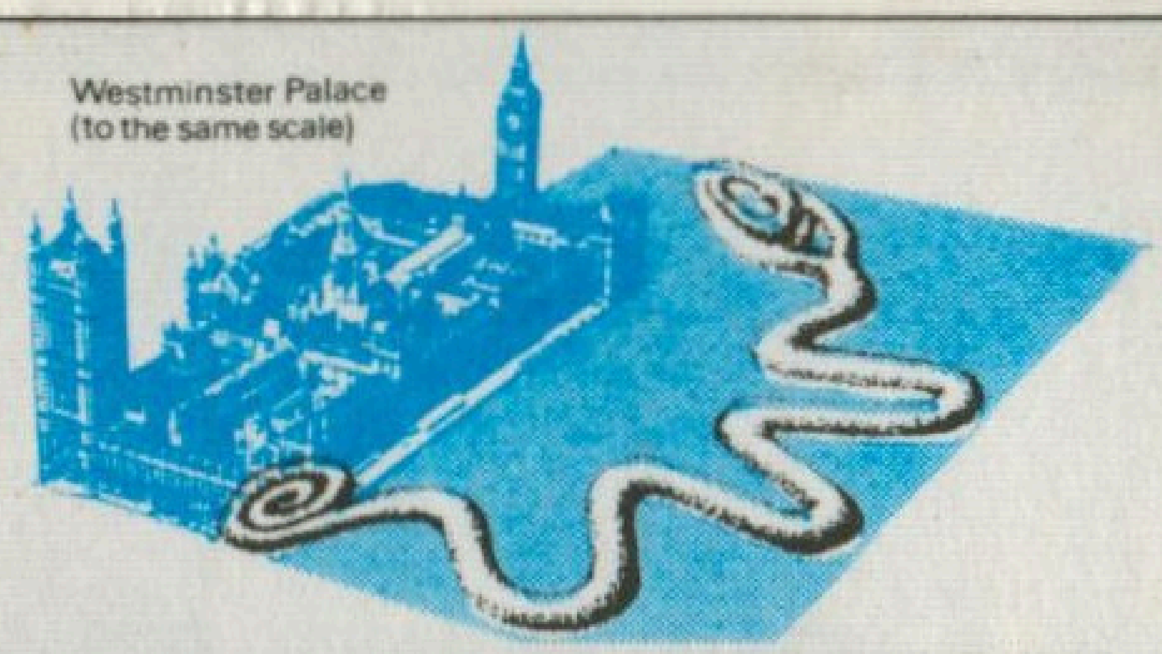


The Viking spacecraft which photographed the surface of Mars from space.

Intriguing American Earthworks

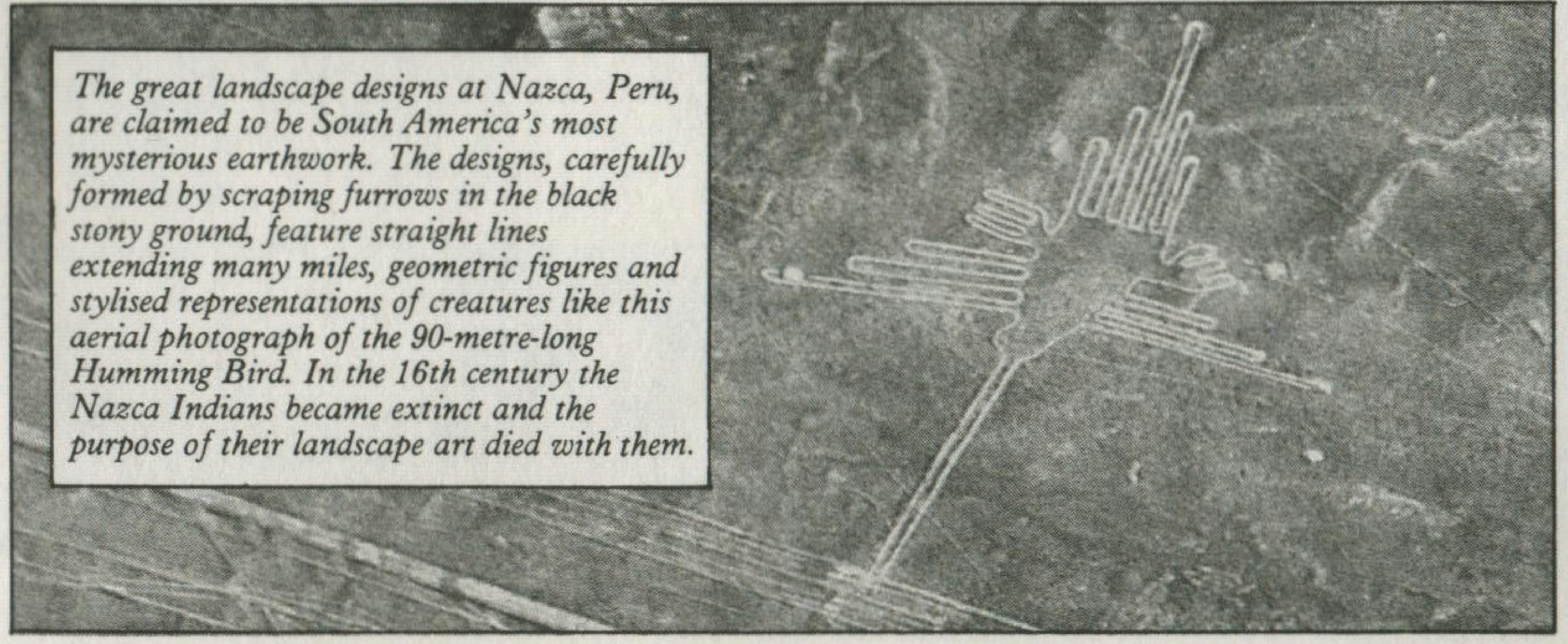
18. North America's Mystery Mounds





In the landscape of the New World lies a mysterious world about which we know very little. North America is littered with stone forts, mines, cities, tombs and temples, engineered water systems, pyramids and standing stones. Some have been attributed to wandering groups of Vikings or Welshmen and some, according to Indian legends, were already abandoned when their ancestors migrated there.

Among the most interesting are the 'Effigy Mounds', animal-shaped earthworks like the 370 metre-long Great Serpent Mound, in Ohio, shown here. Archaeological research has revealed no clues to its builders or purpose.



The great landscape designs at Nazca, Peru, are claimed to be South America's most mysterious earthwork. The designs, carefully formed by scraping furrows in the black stony ground, feature straight lines extending many miles, geometric figures and stylised representations of creatures like this aerial photograph of the 90-metre-long Humming Bird. In the 16th century the Nazca Indians became extinct and the purpose of their landscape art died with them.

Moving Statues

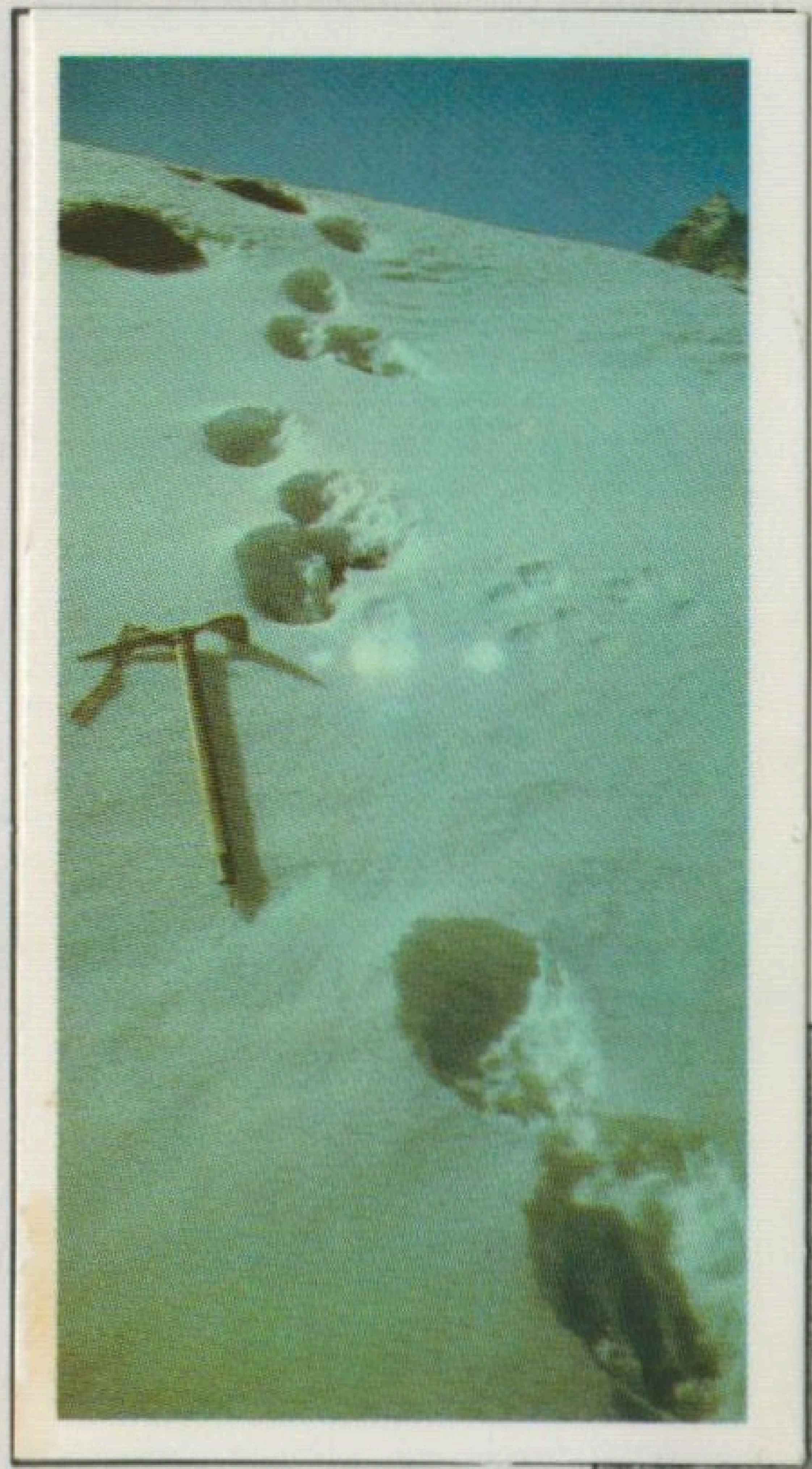
19. The Moving Madonnas

A great many people still believe that miracles are possible. Apparitions of the Virgin Mary are reported worldwide; statues weep and icons bleed. Healing at famous shrines is almost commonplace.

Ireland in 1985 saw a profusion of what believers have called 'miracles' and sceptics called 'the power of suggestion'. They began in February when 30 children were convinced they saw statues of Jesus and Mary moving at Asdee, Co Kerry. By September, reports of moving statues came from over 40 shrines in Ireland. Our photograph shows the most famous shrine, at Ballinspittle, Co Cork, at which many witnesses claimed the statue of the Virgin Mary blinked, smiled and rocked.



Himalayan Yetis

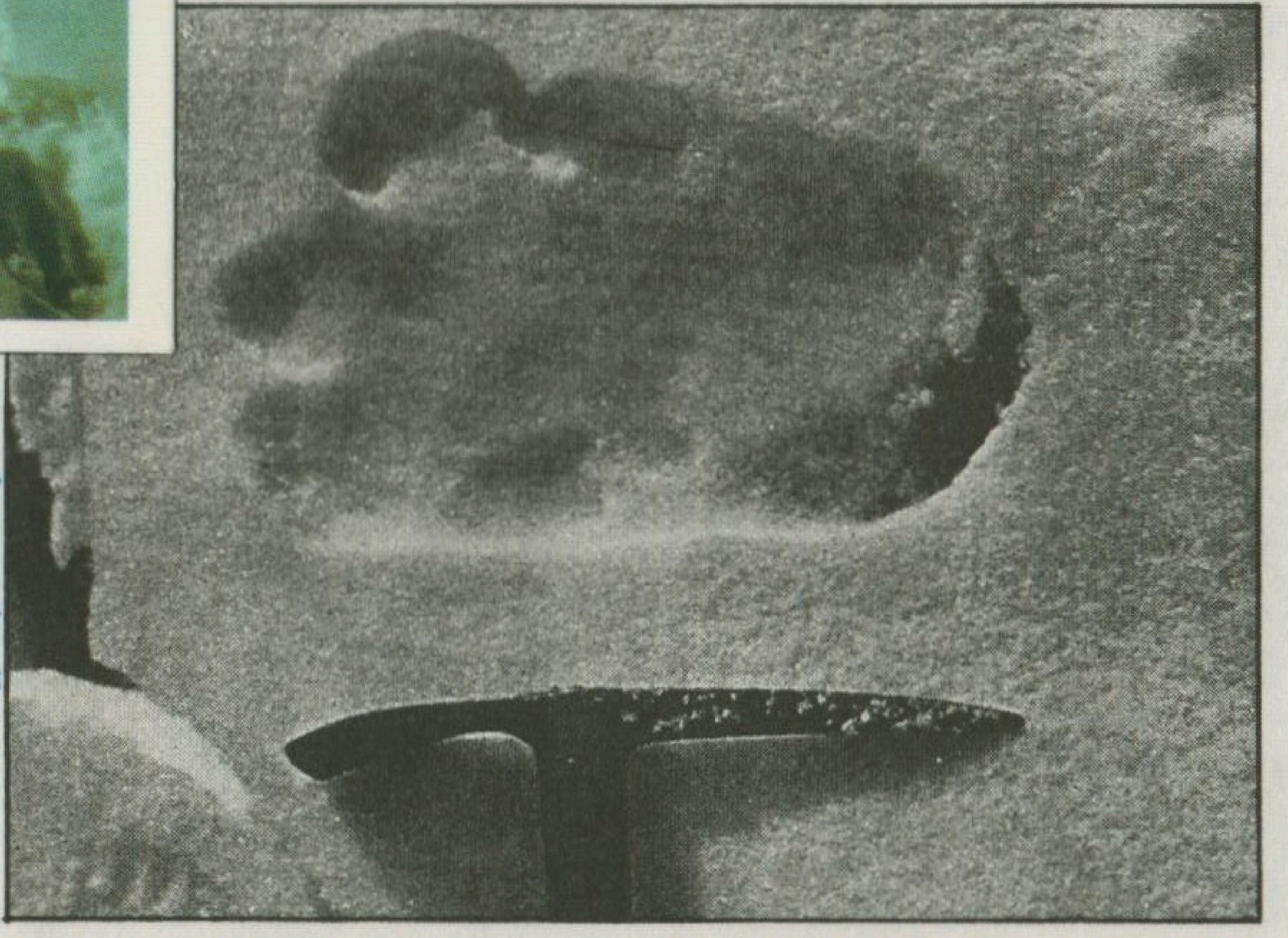


20. The Yetis

The existence of the Yeti – the Sherpa word for the hairy, man-like creatures living in the Himalayan region – is not doubted by many of the hard-headed mountaineers who scale its peaks.

Apart from eye-witness accounts, its screams have been heard, and some monasteries even claim to own skulls and skins. Prints of the Yeti's ape-like feet have been seen by Westerners since 1887. Among the most famous are the photographs of fresh tracks below Everest, taken by Lord Hunt in 1978. Lord Hunt is convinced they were made by 'an unidentified creature still to be discovered'.

This footprint, with curiously shaped toes, was photographed by Eric Shipton on the 1951 British Everest Expedition.



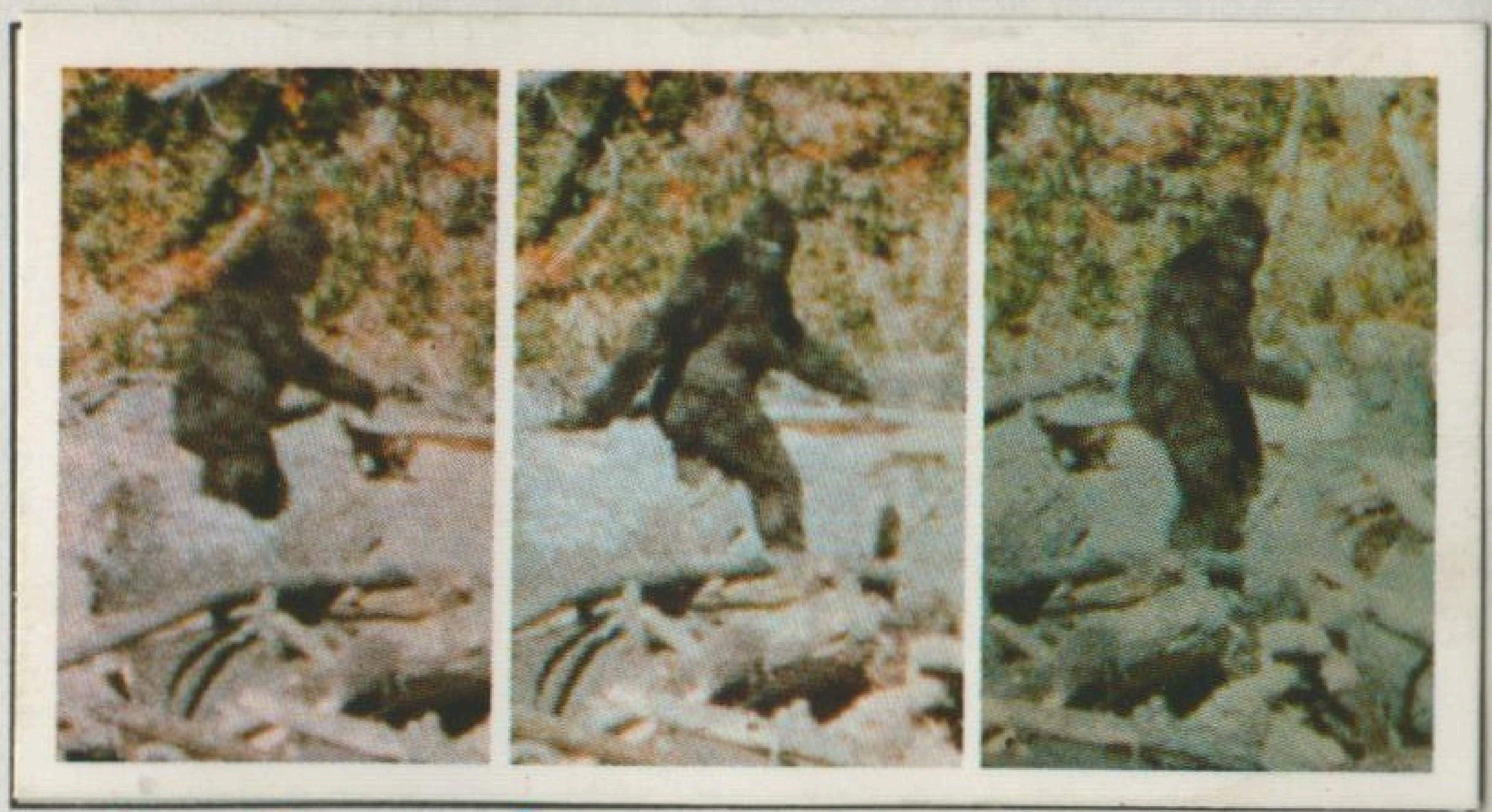


America's 'Bigfoot'

21. America's Hairy Giants

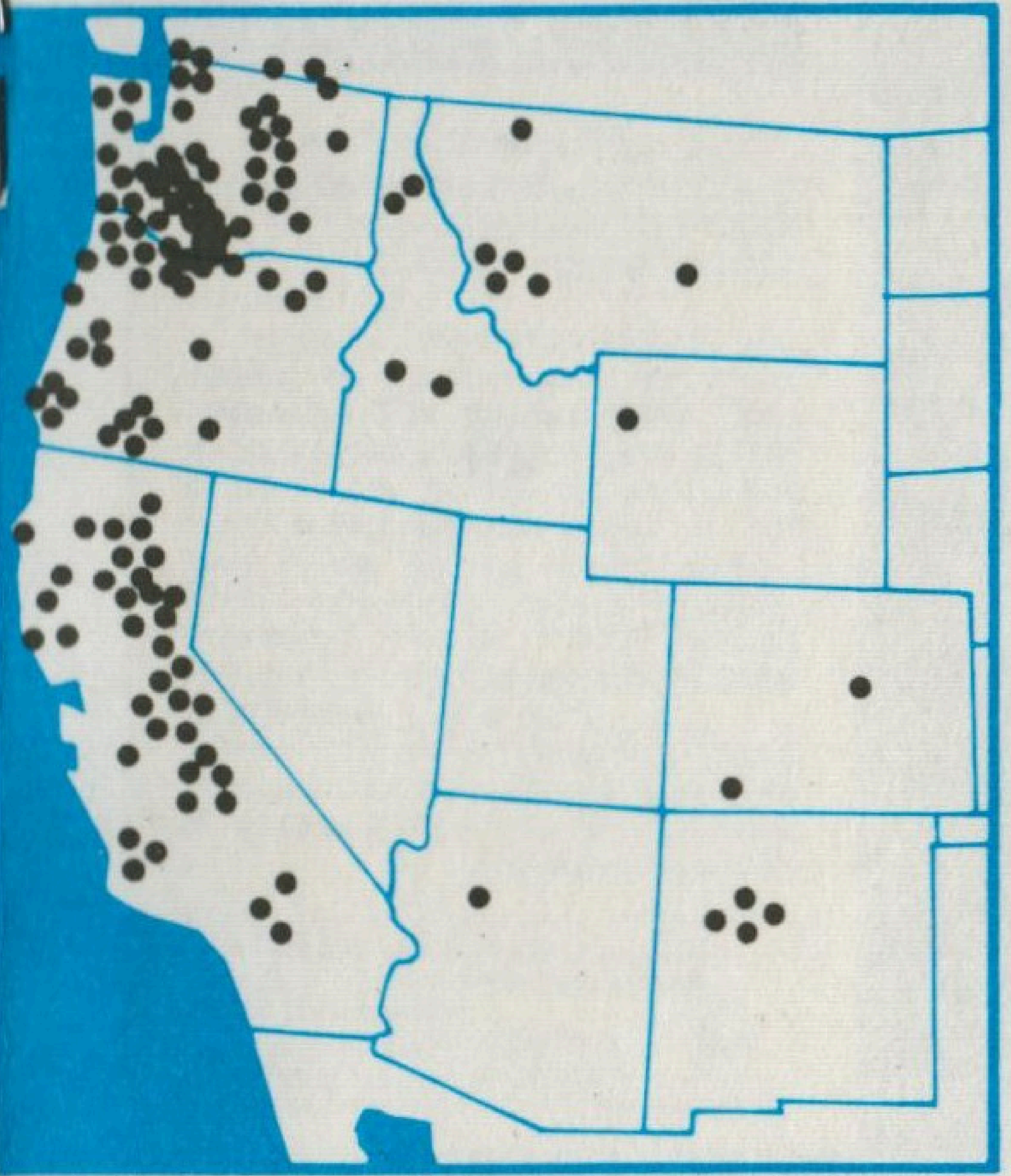
Long before the white settlers invaded North America, the native Indians had their legends of 'sasquatch' (Bigfoot), huge hairy man-like creatures, occasionally seen by hunters in the remote mountain forests. These shy, solitary giants, who sometimes reach over two metres tall, are expert woodsmen but keep well clear of humans, and so are rarely seen. Despite dozens of sightings every year and the growing evidence of their existence, many zoologists remain unconvinced.

These three frames are from a unique and genuine cine film taken by Roger Patterson in October 1967, when he surprised a Bigfoot at Bluff Creek in northern California.

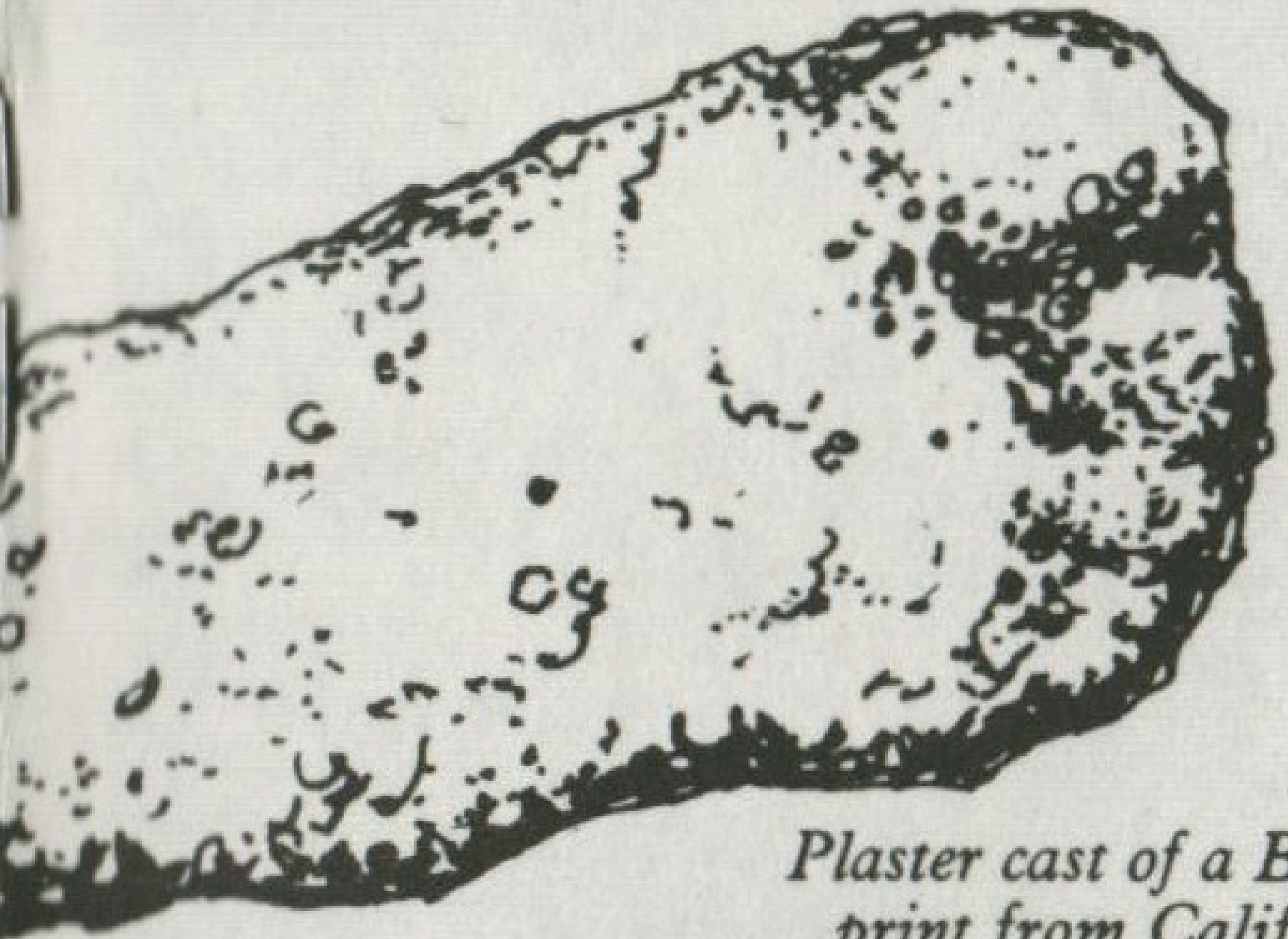








This is the area of North America which yields the most frequent modern reports of Bigfoot.



Plaster cast of a Bigfoot print from California. A typical print is about 45cm long and 18cm wide.

The 'Neanderthal Iceman'

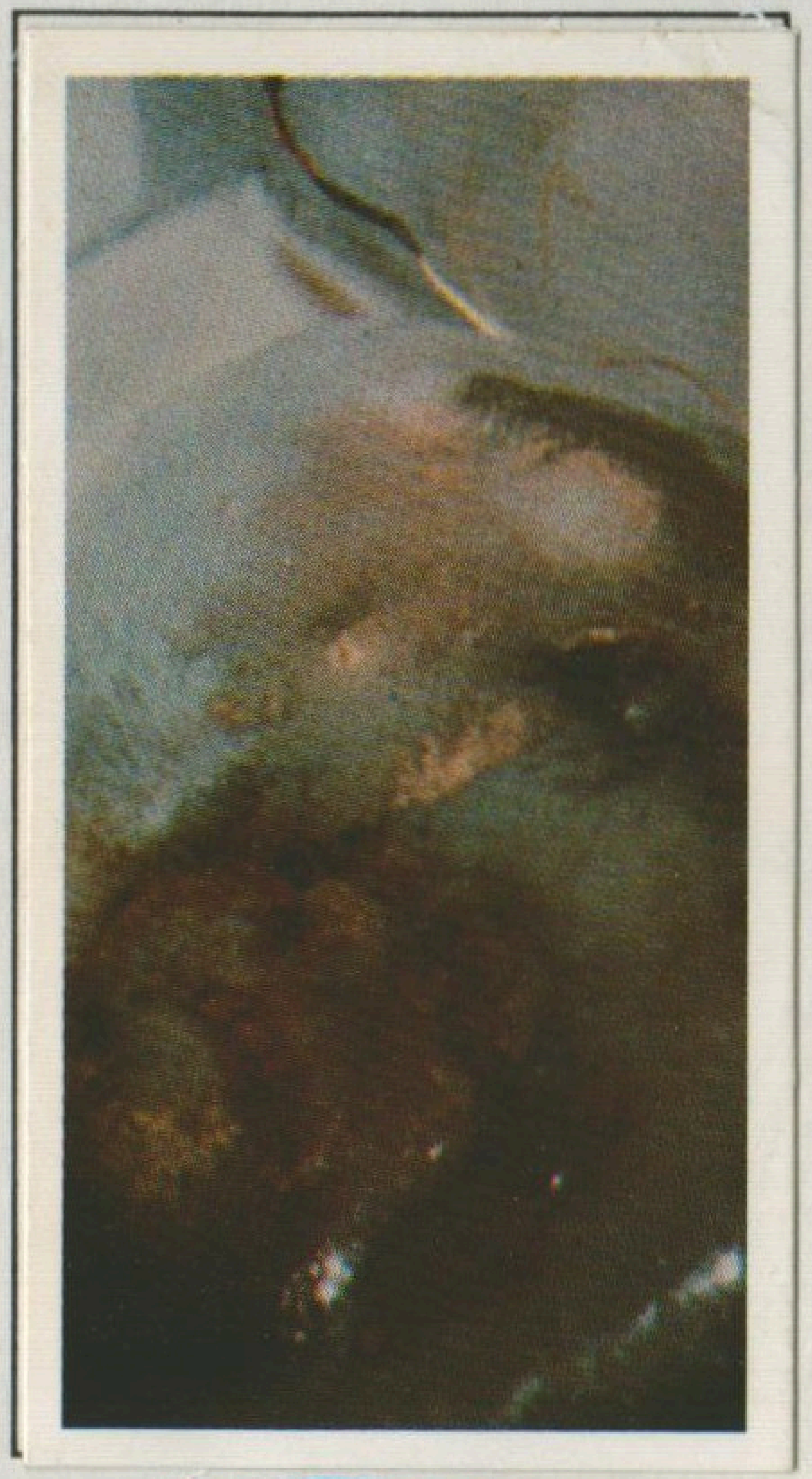
22. Neanderthal Iceman

In December 1968, two leading zoologists, Ivan Sanderson and Dr Bernard Heuvelmans, spent three days examining what they became convinced was a dead Neanderthal man, allegedly found in the Vietnam jungle.

Neanderthals were supposedly thousands of years extinct, yet here was a fresh corpse, preserved in ice, in a travelling show in Minnesota. The second shock discovery was that this early man had been shot in the back of the head.

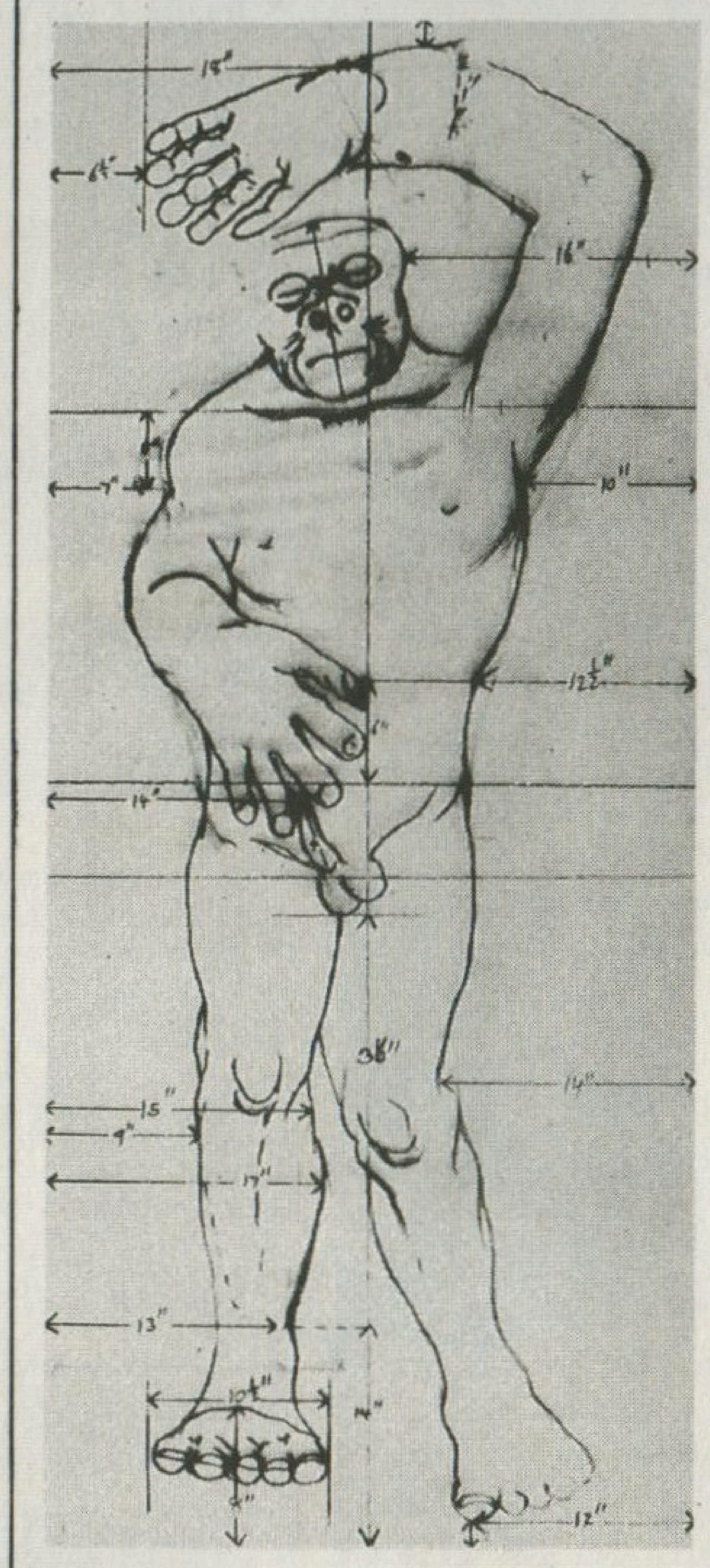
Fearing FBI investigation, the owner disposed of the corpse and substituted a model. The 'find of the century' has become another complete mystery.







An interpretation of the Neanderthal's face through the covering ice, drawn by Ivan T. Sanderson, the zoologist who first examined it.



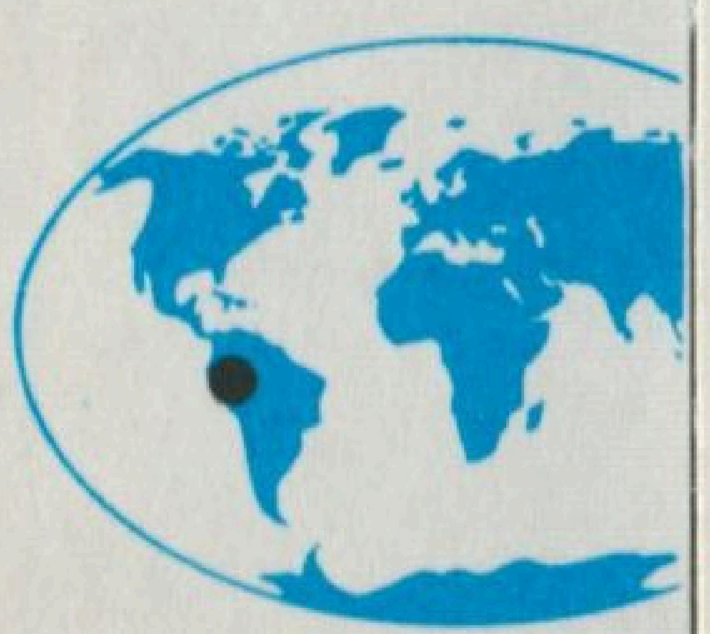
An outline drawing with measurements, by Sanderson, of the Neanderthal body.

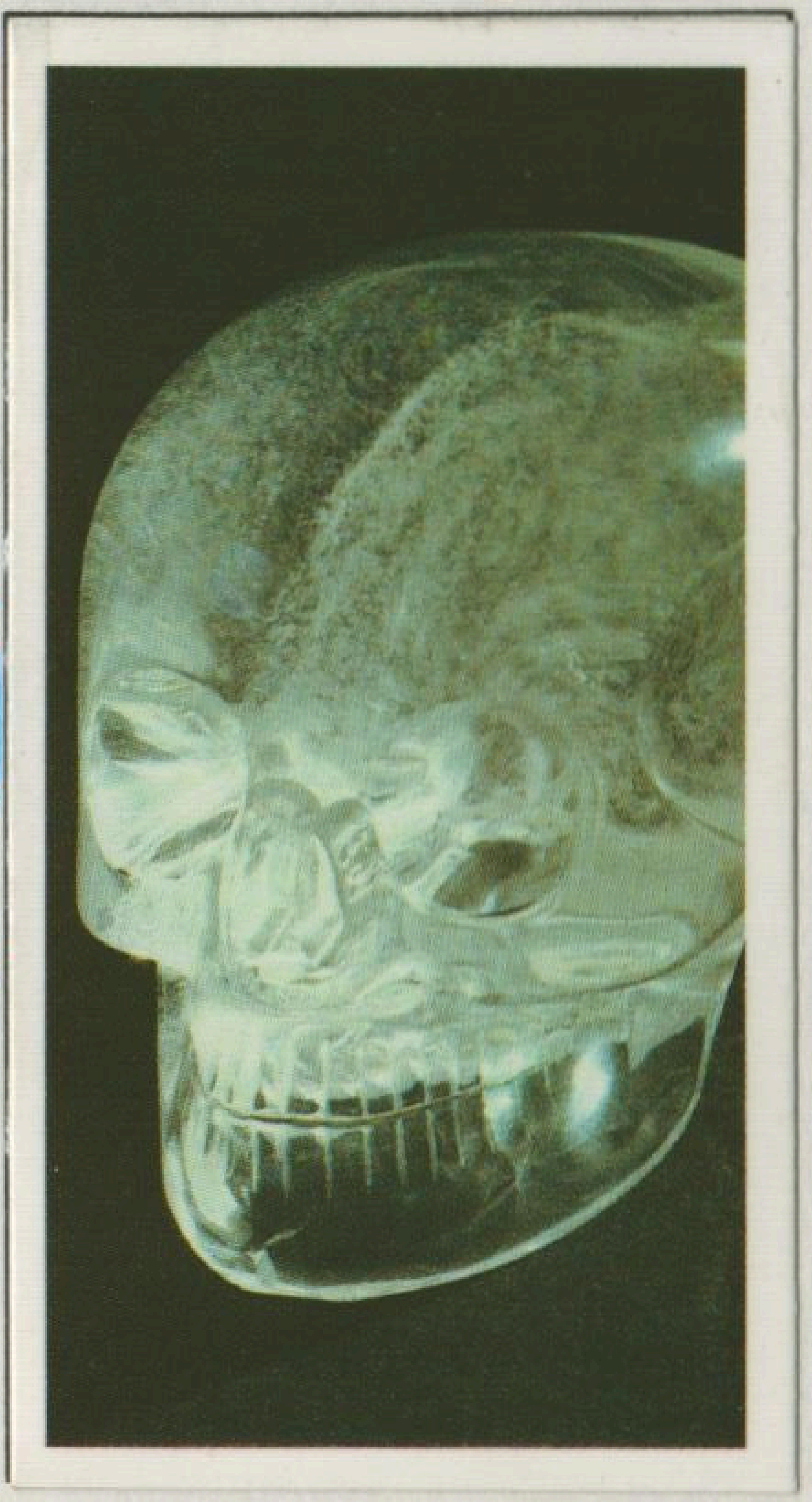
Ancient Skills

23. The Crystal Skull

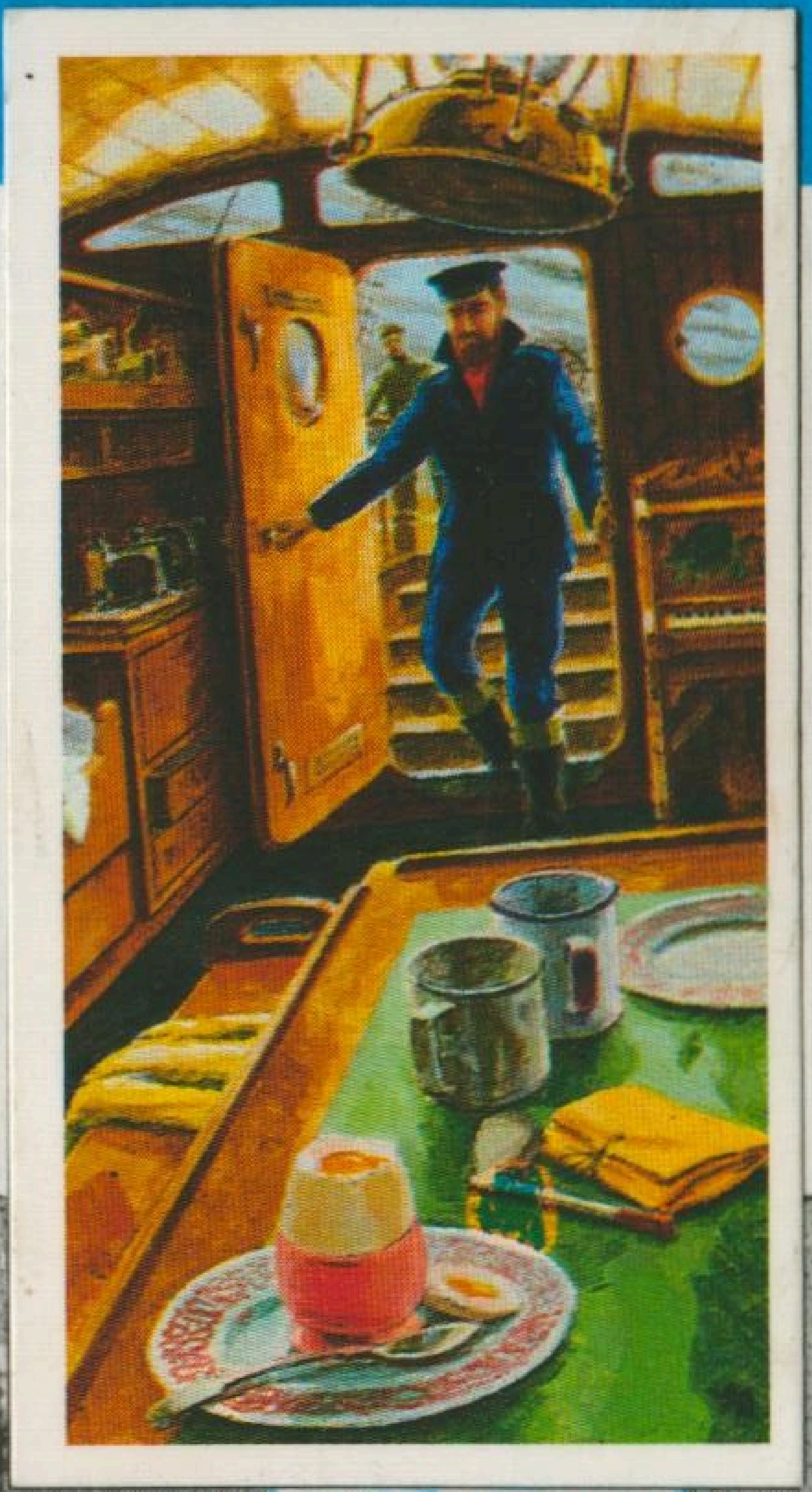
Mystery surrounds two life-sized skulls which have been exquisitely fashioned with great technical skill from blocks of pure rock crystal. Bought in 1896, the skull featured is exhibited in the London Museum of Mankind and is labelled 'possibly of Aztec origin'. The other, owned by Anna Mitchell-Hedges, was found by her in 1927 in the Mayan city of Lubaantum, British Honduras. It is more life-like and has a movable jaw. The Mitchell-Hedges family steadfastly refuses to reveal anything more about its origin.

Scientific dating methods have failed to date either skull, and some experts say even their country of origin is in doubt.





The Greatest Sea Mystery



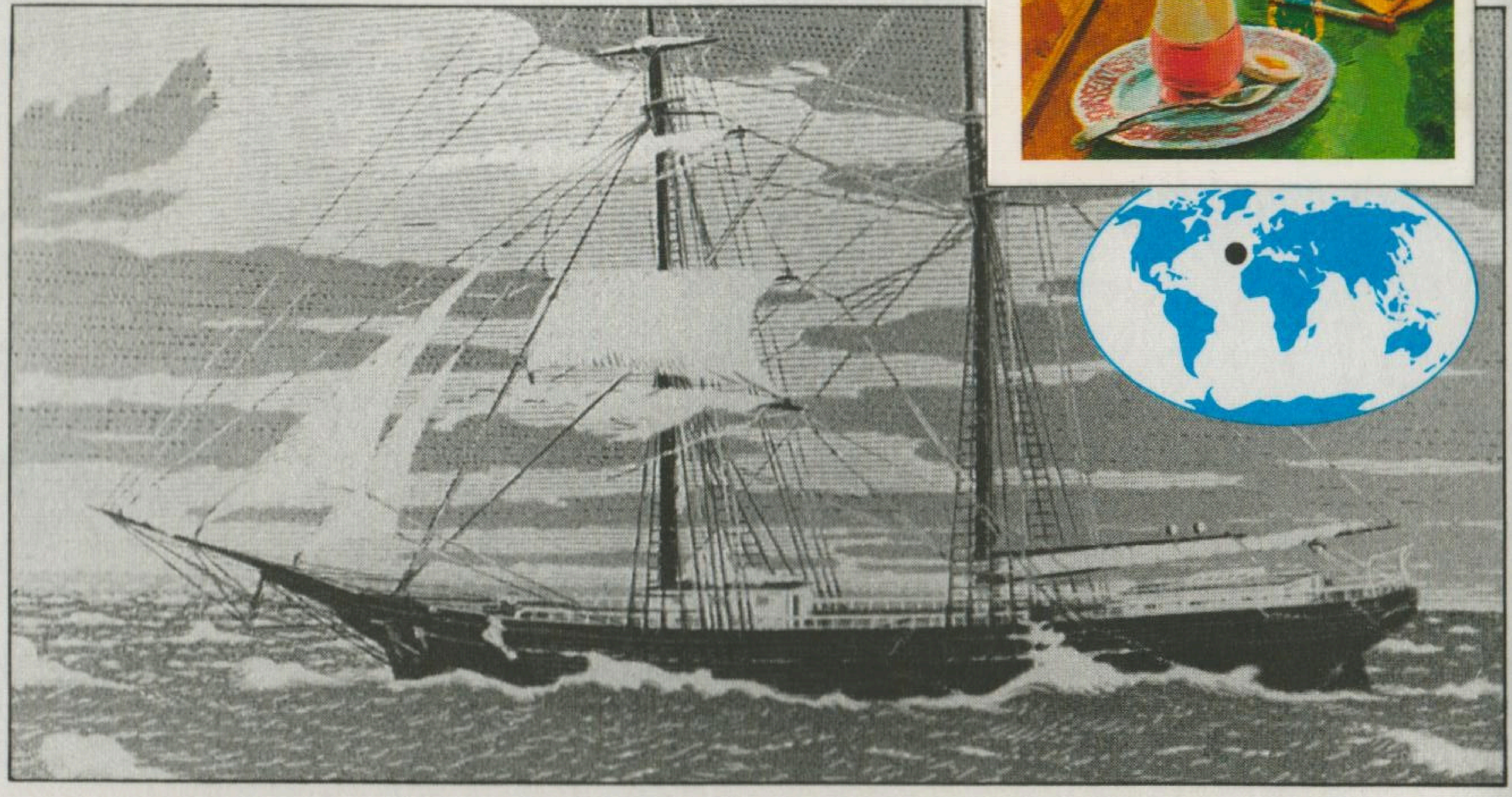
24. The *Mary Celeste* Mystery

Captain David Moorhouse of the British ship *Dei Gratia* sighted the *Mary Celeste* 600 miles off the Portuguese coast on December 4th, 1872.

The *Mary Celeste* was lurching, her rigging in disarray and her wheel unmanned. The boarding party found nothing missing except the crew and the lifeboat. The provisions, cargo and crew's belongings were intact. The last entry in the log was 11 days earlier. There were many signs of suddenly interrupted everyday activity: unmade beds, an open skylight and an unfinished calculation by a loose chart.

After rigorous investigations lasting years, the fate of the *Mary Celeste* is one of the great marine mysteries of all time.

A contemporary engraving of the 'Mary Celeste'.



The Fairies in the Glen







25. The Cottingley Fairies

Since 1917, the series of photographs taken by Frances Griffiths and Elsie Wright (then aged 10 and 15) in a glen at Cottingley, Yorkshire, had been believed by many to show real fairies. The photographs were finally revealed in 1982 as clever fakes. The young girls had fooled millions, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes.

However, Frances and Elsie firmly maintain that their original purpose was to illustrate the little creatures that they still believe they saw in their glen. Elsie, especially, had several psychic experiences; and psychics traditionally claim to see what 'less sensitive' people cannot.

Another of the 'Cottingley fairies' photographs, showing Frances Griffiths and a 'fairy'.

Crusader's Ghost?

26. The Ghost at the Altar

This 1964 photograph shows a mysterious figure kneeling at the altar of St Mary the Virgin, Woodford, Northants, yet Gordon Carroll saw no-one in the church when taking this and other photographs. Camera and film were examined by experts; the figure appeared on only one frame and was not a reflection or a double-exposure.

Curiously, the 600-year-old heart of a Crusader was found at the top of one of the church's pillars, perfectly preserved although wrapped only in cloth. It is now kept in a glass case and fuels the idea that the ghostly image could be that of the long-dead knight.





Flying Reptiles

27. The Pterodactyl Mystery



The race of pterosaurs thrived between 65 and 150 million years ago. The idea that some of these flying reptiles may have survived into the present was made famous by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional description of *The Lost World.* Contrary to the image popularized by science-fiction films, most pterodactyls were small, some sparrow-sized.

One exception, a pterodactyl called *Quetzalcoatalus* (the largest known winged creature, with a wingspan of about 15 metres), presents an evolutionary riddle. Its bones are too thin to have borne the great stress of flying. And if it could not fly, why did it develop such immense wings?

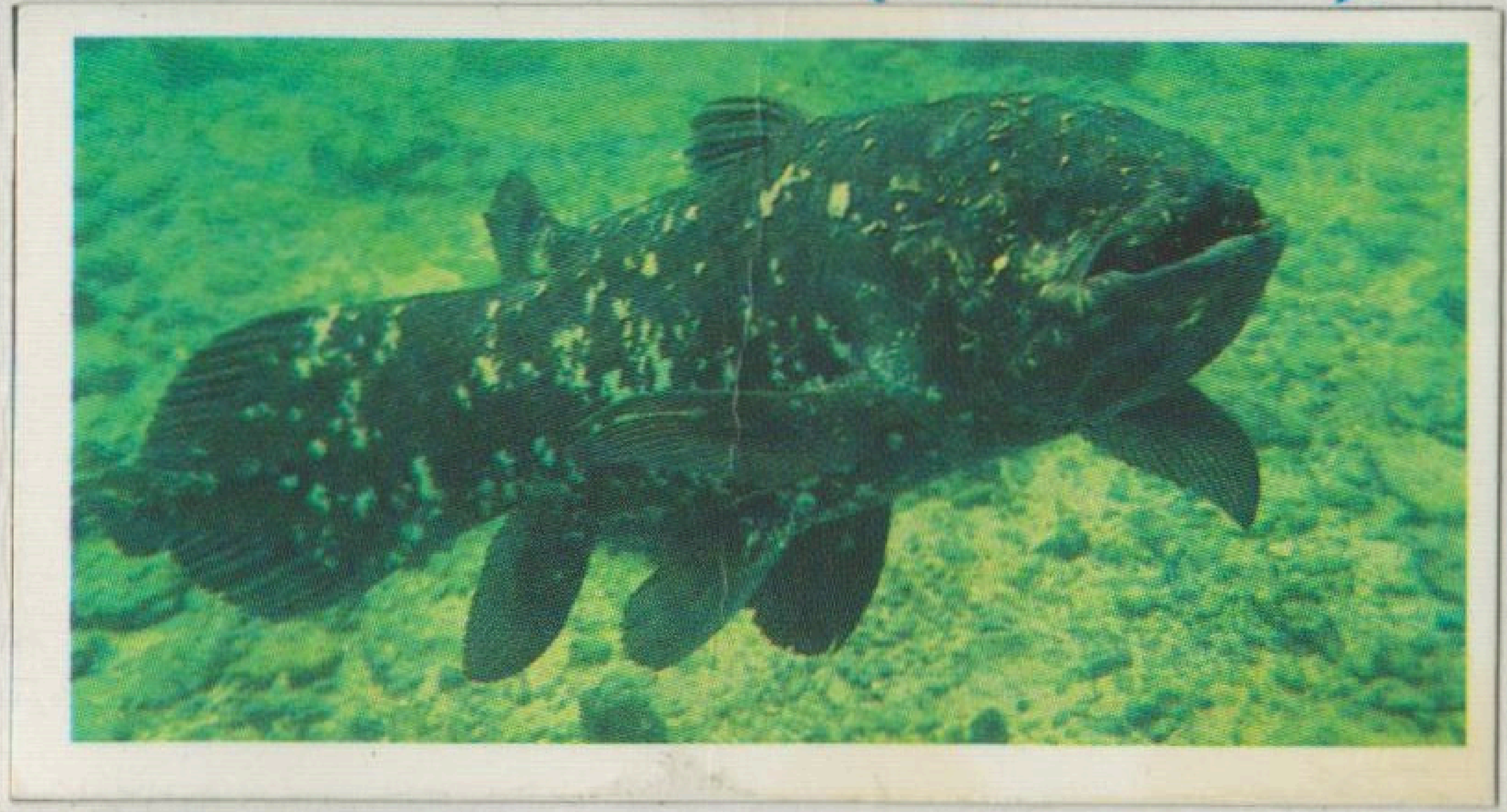


Reconstruction of a Pteranodon, a toothless and tail-less type of pterosaur.

Survivor from the Past

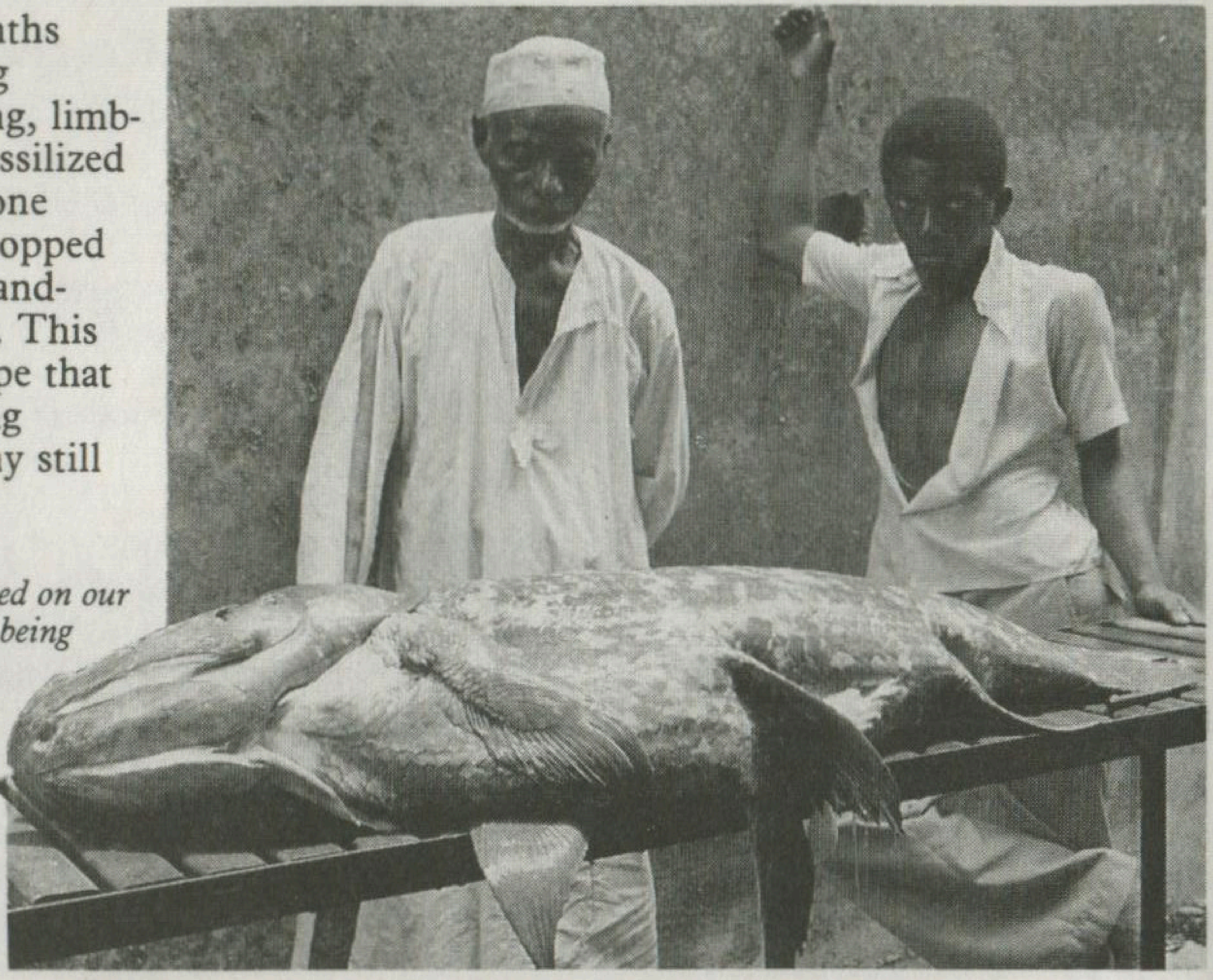


28. Living Fossils



The discovery of a living coelacanth in 1938, off South Africa, astounded scientists and public alike who thought this primitive fish became extinct 70 million years ago. Since 1938, other rare specimens, like the 1.5 metre-long one photographed here, have been caught.

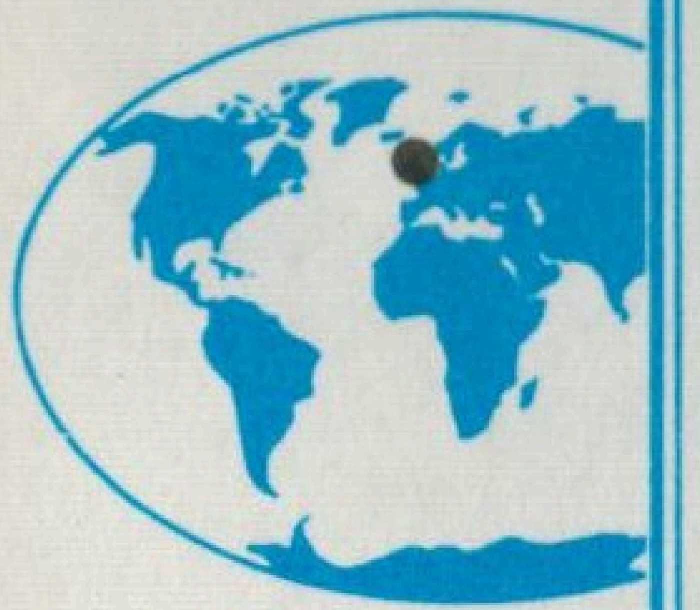
Today's coelacanths have the same lung structure and strong, limb-like fins as their fossilized ancestors, and no-one knows why they stopped evolving towards land-dwelling creatures. This discovery gives hope that other creatures long thought extinct may still exist.



The Coelacanth pictured on our card died shortly after being photographed and was displayed by the Comoro Island fishermen who caught it in 1979.

Electric Energy





29. Ball Lightning

Until recently ball lightning was regarded as folklore, but today's physicists accept that ordinary lightning can break up into long-lived spheres of energy. How this happens remains a mystery.

Reports of ball lightnings vary: sizes range from tiny up to about a metre across; some glow a single colour while others are multicoloured. They can appear inside closed rooms and have been seen inside aeroplanes. They can explode or quietly vanish.



The uncanny ability of ball lightning to appear suddenly inside rooms features in the folklore of many cultures.

Our photograph was once thought to show a ball lightning path, so typical was it of the erratic flight of these mysterious glowing spheres of energy. In this case, analysis showed the light path was caused by a street-lamp and movement of the camera during a long exposure.




30. Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs)

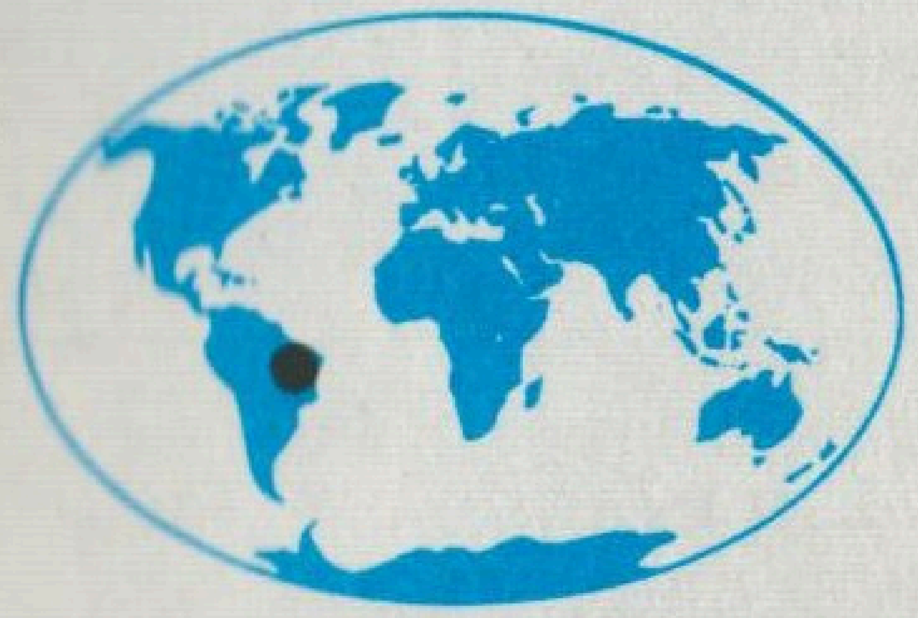
This photograph of a mystery object in the sky is one of the most convincing of UFO photographs. It was taken by farmer Paul Trent at McMinnville, Oregon, on 11th May 1950. Detailed analysis of the picture by different investigators has confirmed Trent's observation of a large metallic disc between 20-30 metres in diameter, about 1km away.

Over the last 30 years, the study of UFO's and of the thousands of people who see them has gained credibility. Despite the mounting evidence, the great breakthrough in understanding what has been called 'the greatest mystery of our age' has yet to be made.

An enlargement of the mystery aerial object photographed by Paul Trent.



'the Greatest Mystery of our Age'

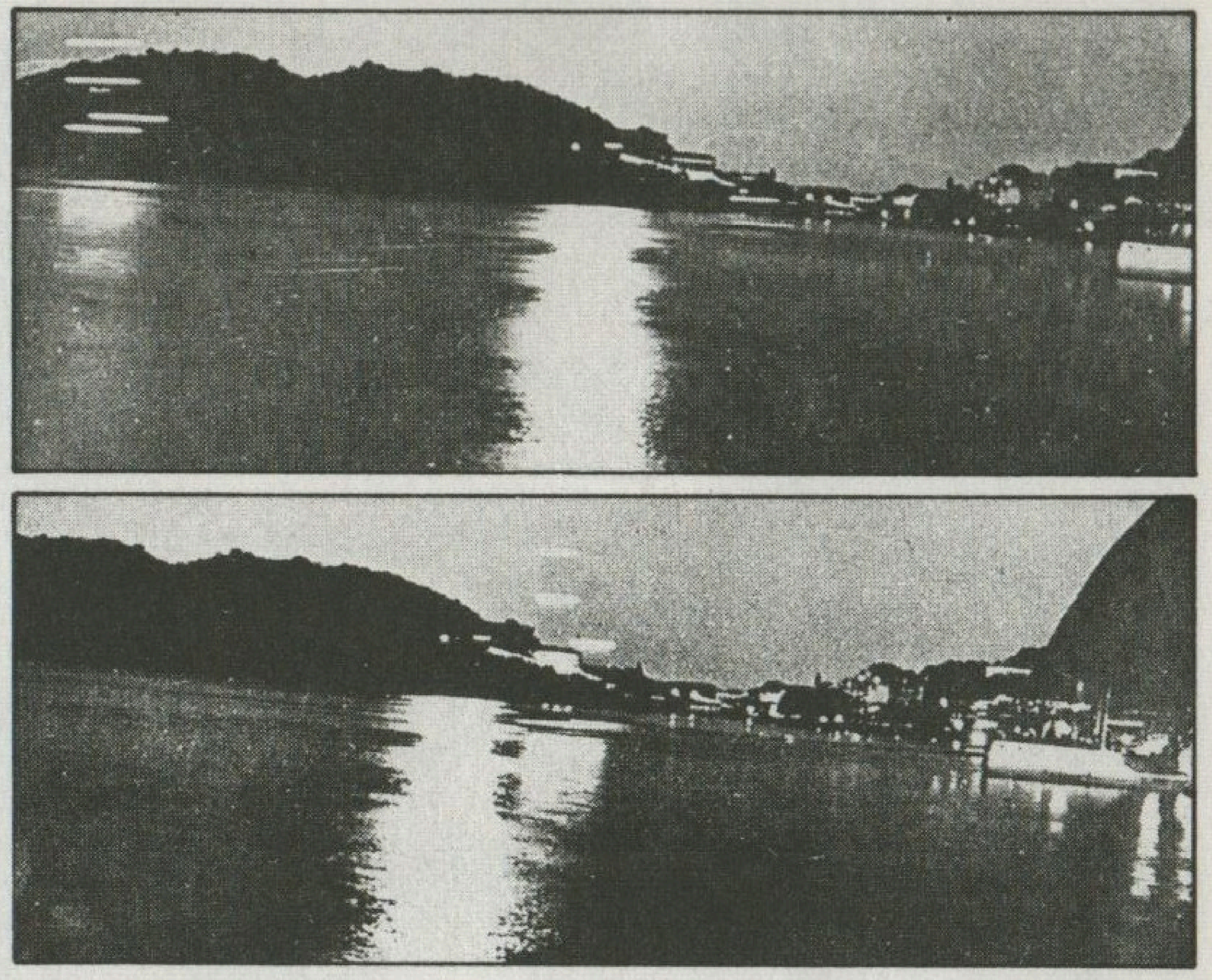


This strange Saturn-like UFO (right) was photographed in 1958, from the deck of a naval training ship. It is one of a series of photographs taken showing the object flying over the Brazilian island of Trinidade.

Some natural phenomena may be mistaken for UFO's even by experienced observers. For example, these lenticular clouds, photographed over Santos, Brazil, look remarkably like the convention idea of a UFO.







Two evening views of the Brazilian coastal town of Crique D'Urca, near Rio de Janeiro, show a group of fast-moving unidentified lights (note their reflections) photographed in 1970.

Mischievous Spirits



31. Poltergeists

The term 'poltergeist' means 'noisy ghost' and applies to a variety of strange happenings which occur during a 'haunting'. For example, objects levitate, appear and disappear; tappings and other strange noises are heard; even writings of mysterious origin appear.

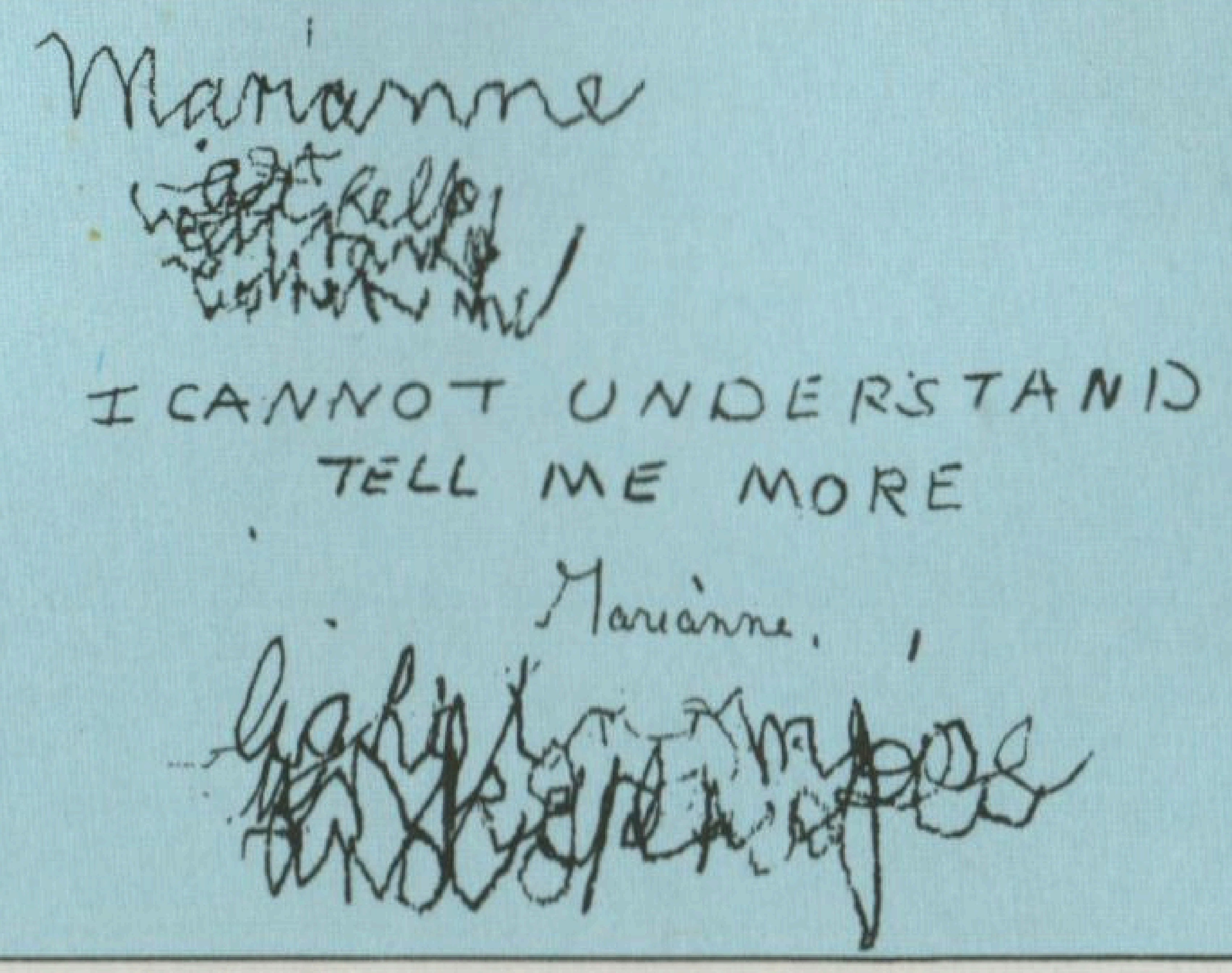
The pot, lid and scissors in our photograph flew in mid-air when the Costa family was plagued by poltergeists in June 1955, in the French village of St Jean de Maurienne.

In the past, these often frightening incidents were thought to be the work of the devil or witches, but modern parapsychologists think some kind of undiscovered 'mind-over-matter' power is a more likely cause.



Borley Rectory

Borley Rectory in Essex was said to be the most haunted house in England. Many mysteries happenings, including eerie messages scrawled on walls (right) were blamed on the tormented spirit of a 13th-century nun. Borley burned down in an unexplained fire in 1939, before Harry Price, the most famous ghosthunter of his day, could complete his investigations.

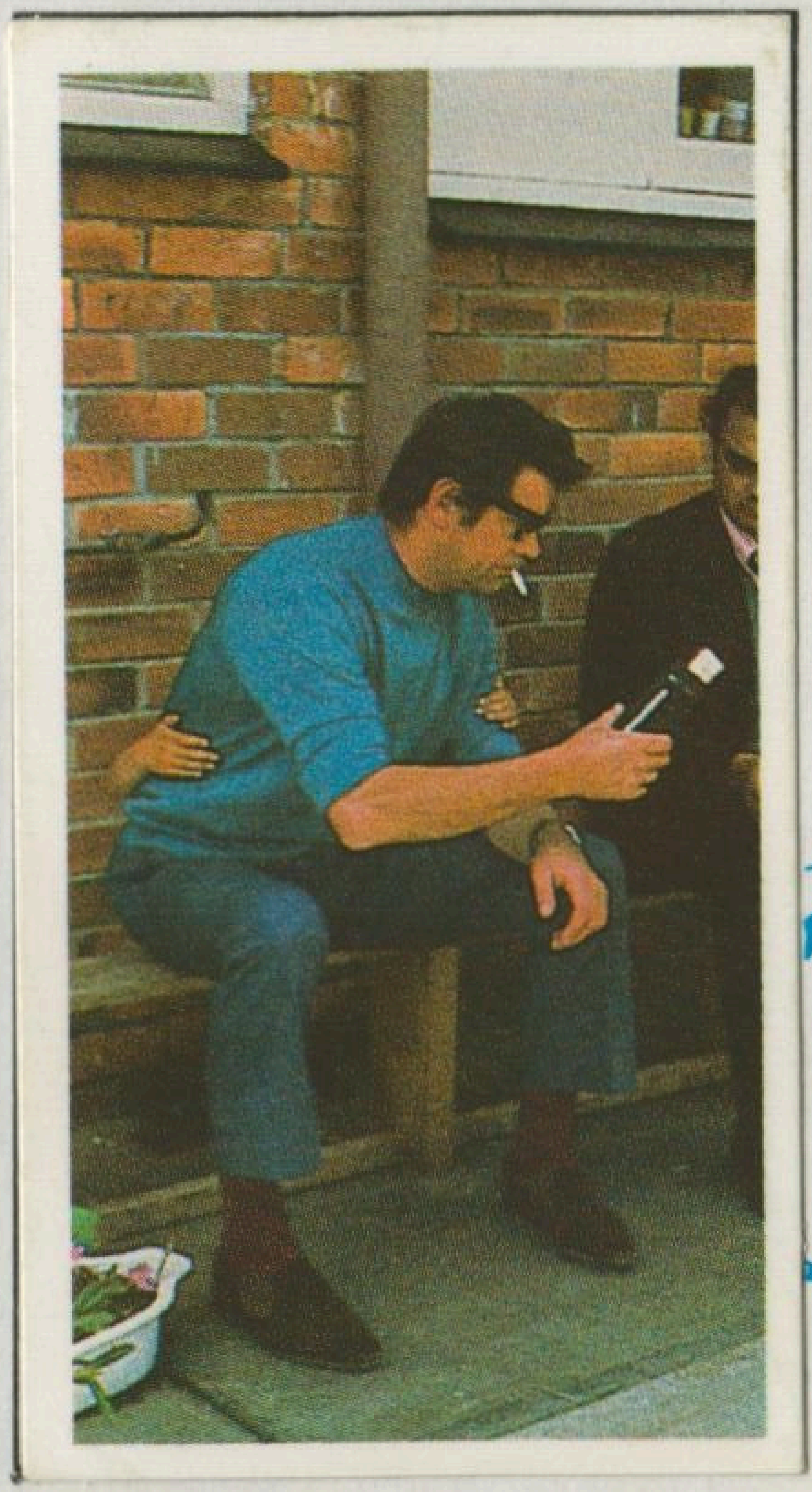


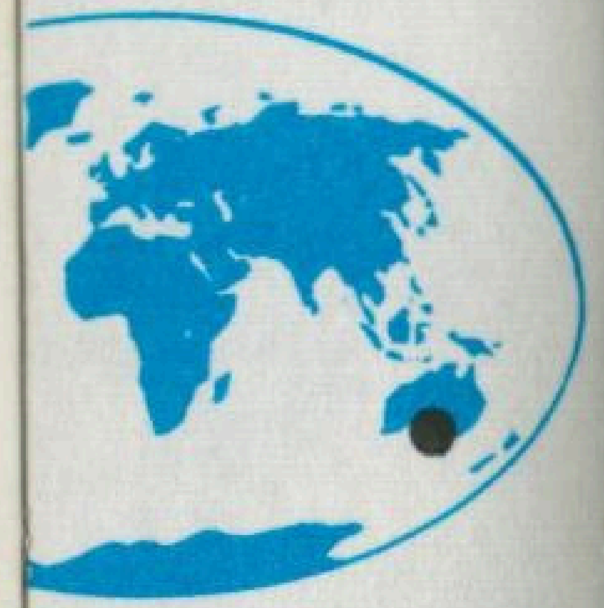
Gripping Phantom

32. Ghostly Hands

Look again at this seemingly innocent family snap, taken by Neville D'Cruz in Adelaide, Australia in 1975. Only after development were the disembodied hands noticed, clutching Neville's brother. The film had not been double-exposed and there was no space between bench and wall for even a child to fit.

It is hard to fit photographs like this one into conventional theories of phantoms. Some researchers have wondered if their origin might be in the mind of man – that a form of 'mind-over-matter' power can imprint images directly onto film, finding there a new canvas for the expression of unconscious tensions.





Barefoot Firewalking





33. Fire-walking

Fire-walking is a very ancient ritual. There are echoes of it in many cultures – the Hindus of India and South Africa, the Chinese Buddhists of Malaysia, Japanese Shintoists, and the Christians of Spain and Greece, to name a few.

Perhaps its highest expression is among the Polynesians of Fiji, who regularly stroll, not over glowing embers or coals, but on white-hot rocks. Charles Parr, who took this photograph on the island of Beqa, examined the feet of the participants the next day. Incredibly, where there should have been terrible injury there was 'not the slightest sign of burning'.

Mountain Mystery

34. Noah's Ark Found?





Has the final resting place of Noah's Ark, on Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey, been confirmed from space? There had always been claims by Armenian Turks that the disintegrating remains of a huge wooden ship has been seen on the mountain. However, they could not be taken seriously until 1958, when American satellite photography revealed a huge ship-like formation over 4000 metres above sea-level.

Because of the military sensitivity of the nearby Russian-Iranian border, a 1960 Turkish Army expedition only had time to take photographs and simple measurements of the curious 140-metre-long depression, which roughly conforms to the Biblical dimensions.



Members of the Turkish Army expedition investigate the strange boat-like feature discovered by an American photographic mapping satellite.

Ancient Death Curse





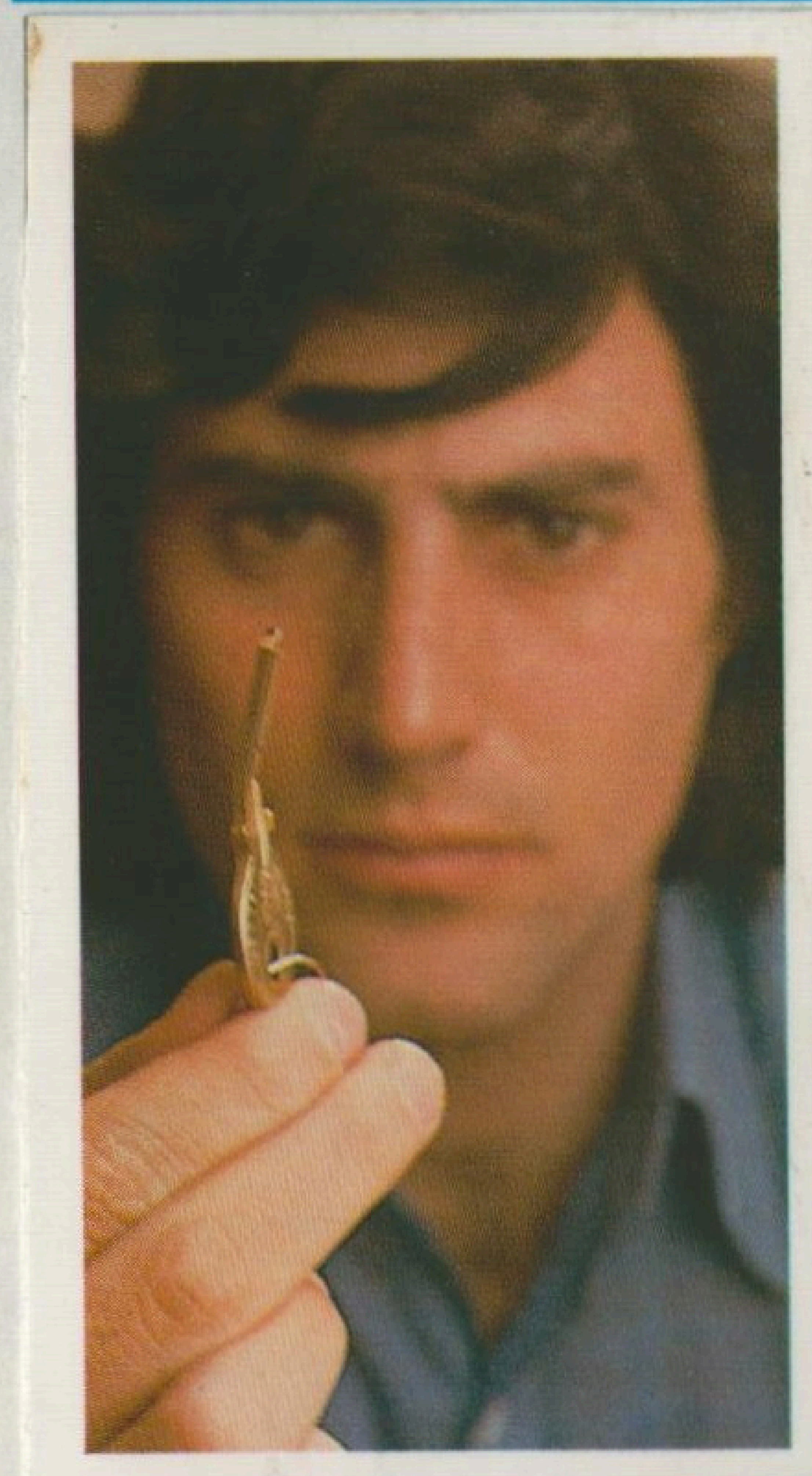
35. The Curse of the Pharaoh

The most famous curse of all is associated with the opening of Tutankhamen's tomb in March 1923. More than 20 of the original archaeological team died in a strange series of 'accidents', and by 1930 only its director, Howard Carter, remained alive.

Lord Carnarvon, the expedition's backer, had been warned in 1922 by a message during a seance and again, later, by a palm-reader. Undaunted, he 'challenged the psychic powers of the ages' as he put it. He died in a fever a few weeks after the opening, some say bitten on the face by a mosquito in the same place as a blemish on Tutankhamen's mask.

Powers of the Mind

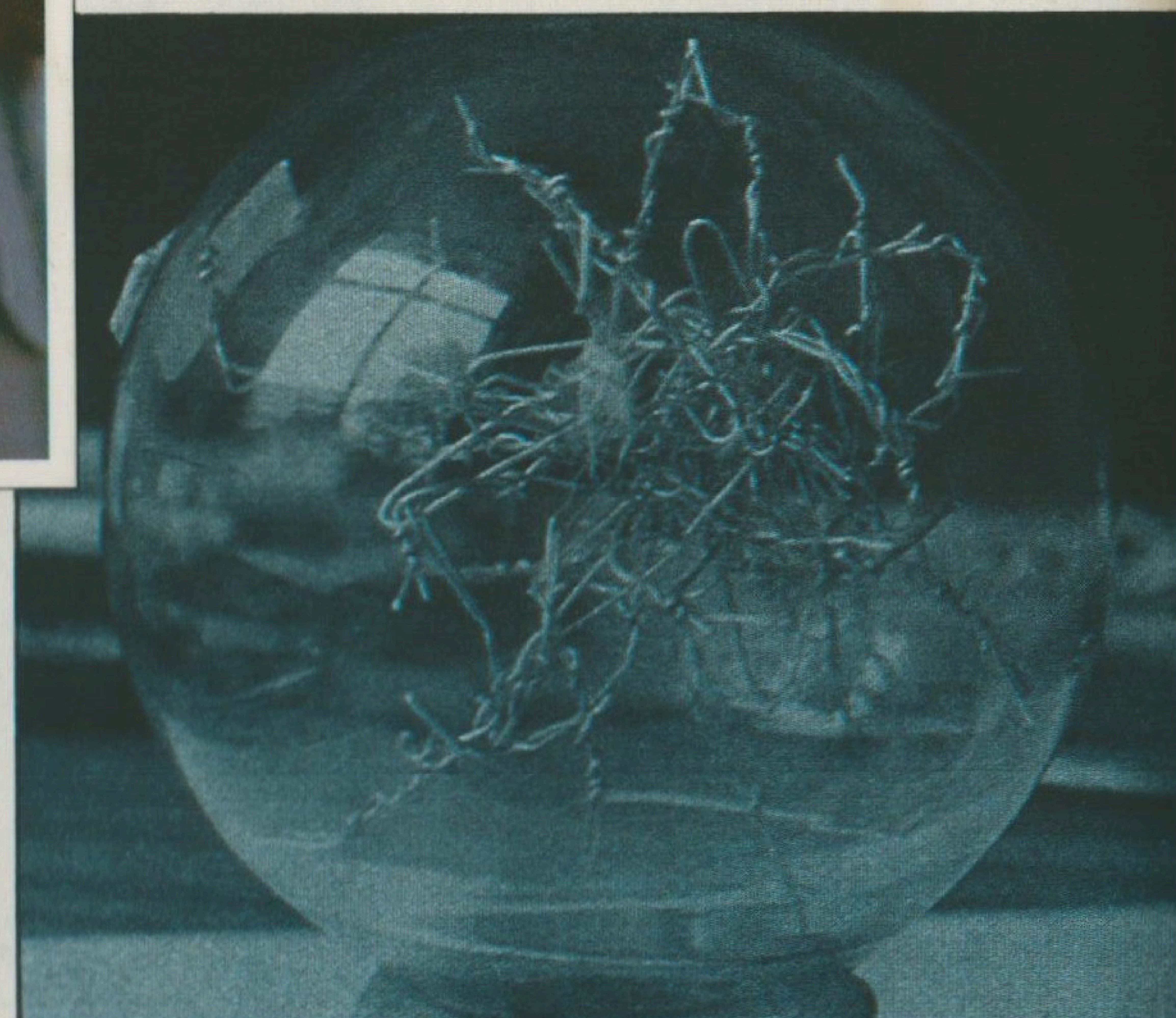




36. Mind Over Matter

Uri Geller, the Israeli psychic who claims to bend metal objects with an undiscovered mental power, became an overnight celebrity on British TV in 1973 after softening and breaking a fork simply by stroking it.

Before this, a Russian housewife named Ninel Kulagina could influence objects to move. Many of the powerful spiritualist mediums of the past could levitate objects during seances. Since Geller, many children have demonstrated partial control of the mind-over-matter force that parapsychologists call psychokinesis, but only a few have proved it in a laboratory.



Following the example of Uri Geller, many British schoolchildren tried to bend metal objects by their mindpower. One boy managed to create this tangled mass of paperclips, while they were sealed in a glass sphere, in an experiment for Professor John Hasted, of University College, London.

Phenomenal Falls

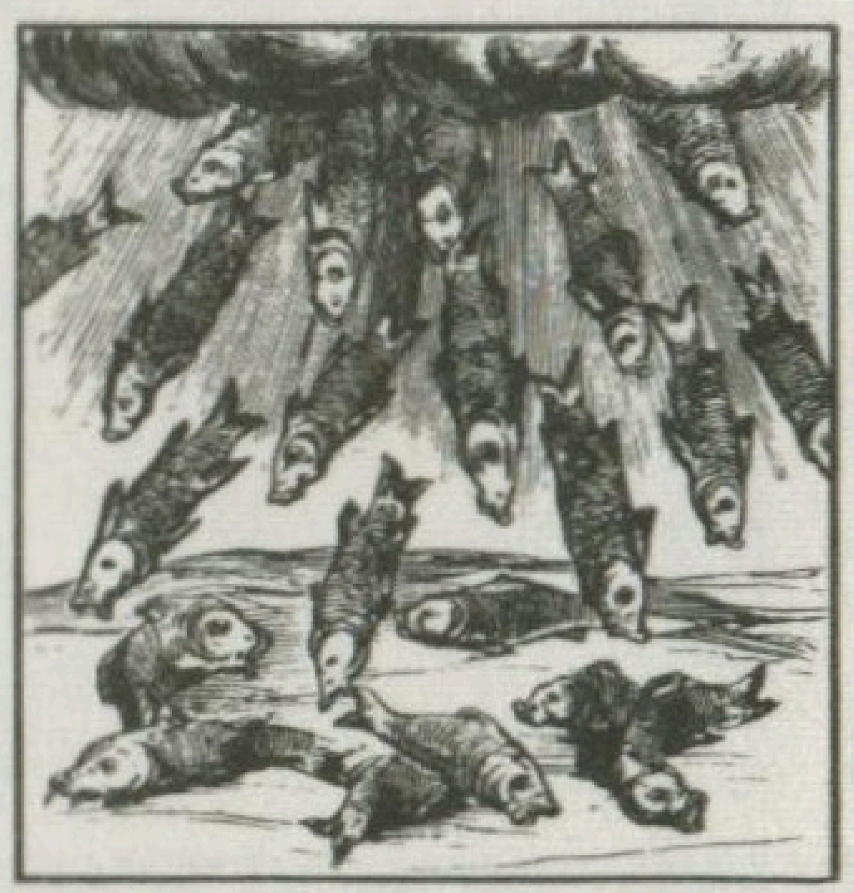


37. Fall of Fishes

In February 1861, following an earthquake at Singapore, a great number of fishes fell from the clouds during an 'extraordinary downpour' lasting three days.

This remarkable incident is typical of a great many documented from Roman times to the present. Not only fishes have fallen unexpectedly from the sky, but also frogs, seeds, stones and huge blocks of ice. The 'official' explanation blames the lifting action of waterspouts or powerful winds; but how these winds select creatures of one species, transport them without scattering, and dump them on a tiny area, has not yet been explained.





This 16th-century woodcut records a rain of fishes in Germany in 689 AD.

Caribbean Mystery

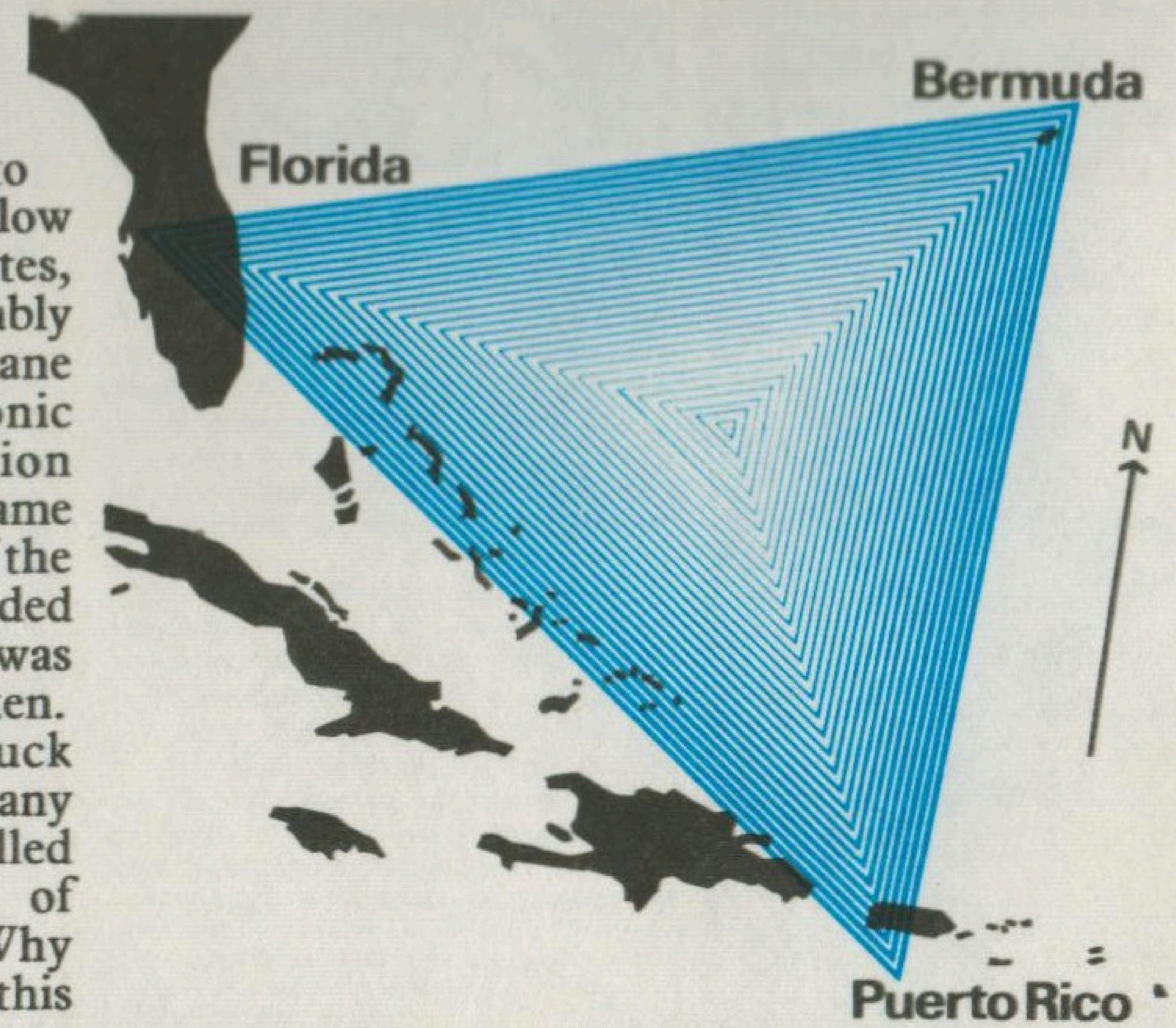




38. The Bermuda Triangle

In November 1964, Chuck Wakely, a charter pilot, was returning alone from Nassau to Miami when he noticed a faint glow on the plane's wings. In five minutes, the glow had become unbearably bright and he had to fly the plane manually because the electronic equipment would not function properly. Soon, even that became impossible and he had to let go of the controls. Eventually, the glow faded and normality returned. Wakely was able to land safely but badly shaken.

Whatever happened to Chuck Wakely's plane is only one of many strange happenings in the so-called 'Bermuda Triangle', a place of mystery since the 16th century. Why losses of ships and planes in this region are much higher than average has never been satisfactorily explained.



The region off the coast of Florida which has accounted for an unusual number of sea disappearances.

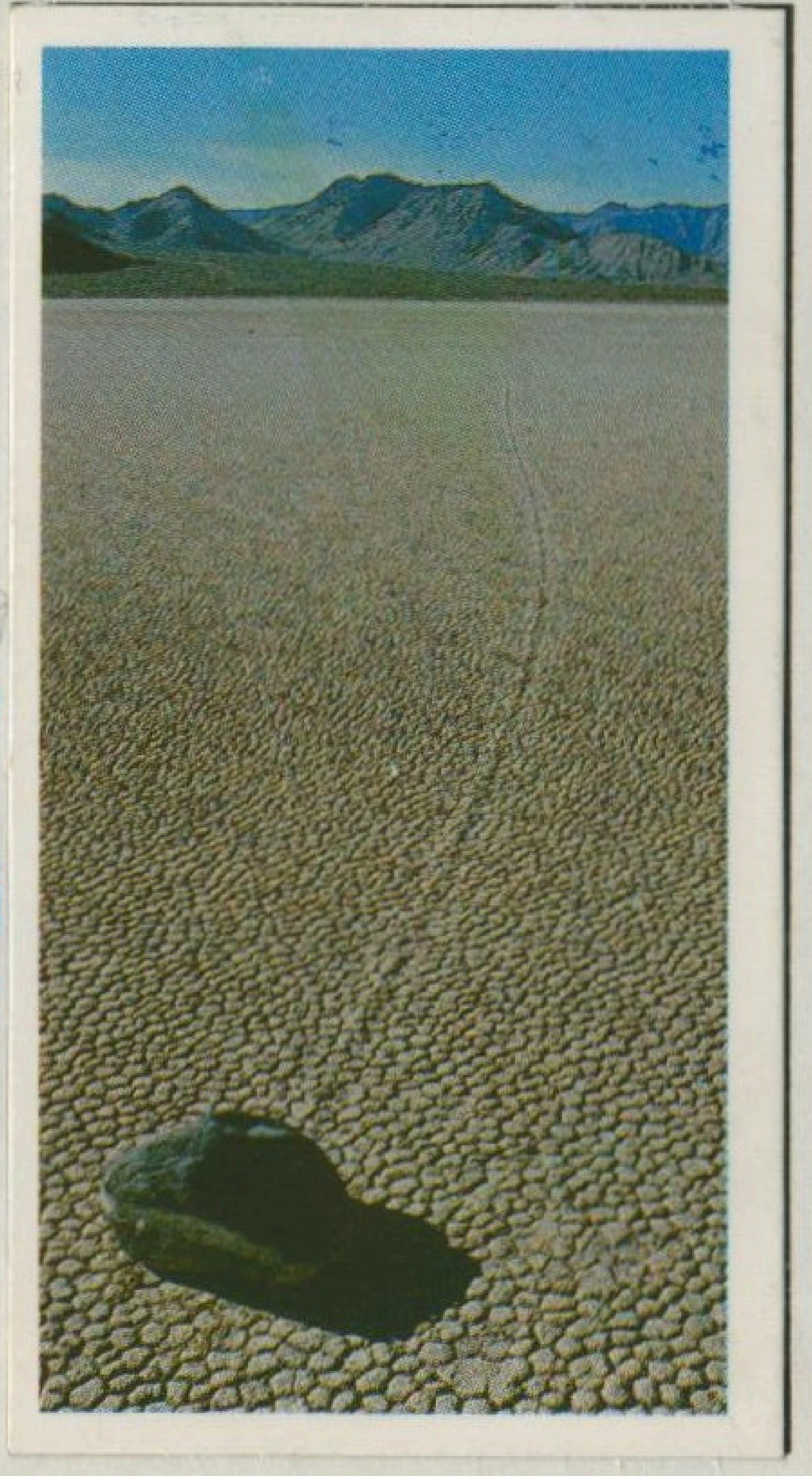
Rocks that Move

39. The Moving Rocks of Death Valley

The dry lake bed called Racetrack Playa lies high in the mountains on California's border with Nevada, in the desolate Death Valley National Park. The tracks of moving rocks in the dried mud of the Playa first came to light in the 1950s, and have excited speculation about 'living' rocks.

Dr Robert Sharp, a Californian geologist who has studied the phenomenon since 1969, believes the rocks, weighing up to 300kg, are pushed by strong winds after rain has made the Playa surface slippery. But this is only one of many theories; no-one has yet seen the rocks move and many aspects of the tracks are still unexplained.





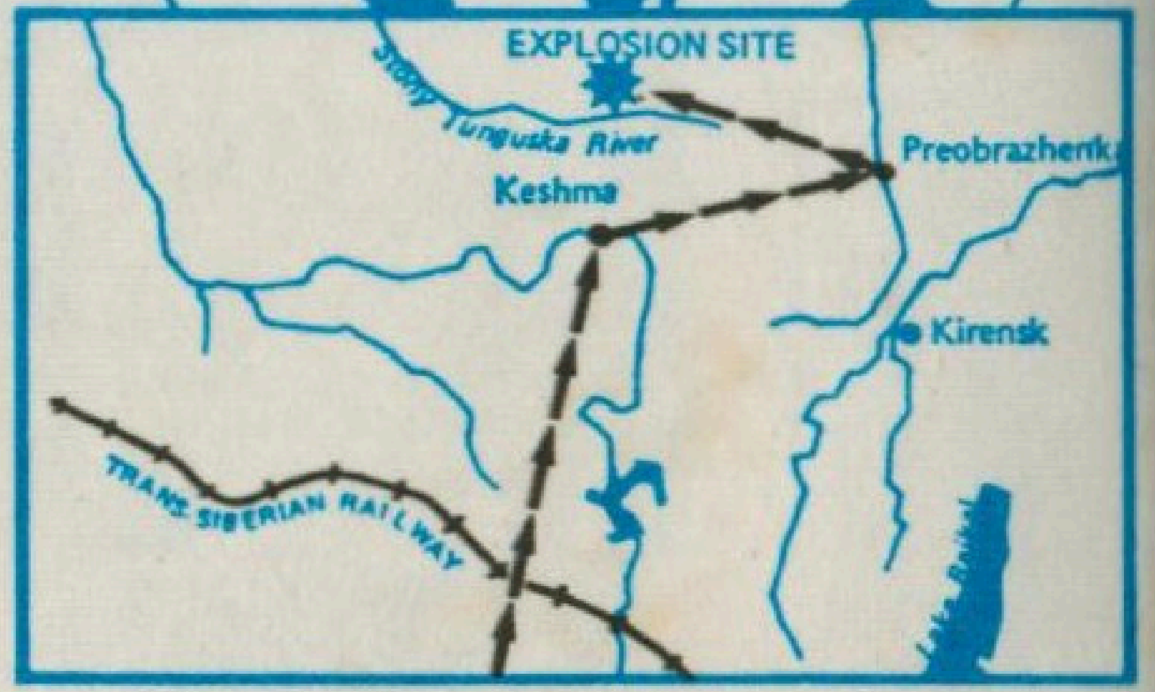
Siberian Cataclysm



40. The Tunguska Event

One of the biggest explosions of the pre-nuclear age occurred on 30th June 1908, flattening hundreds of square miles of the forested Tunguska region of Siberia. Witnesses spoke of the terrible destruction when a bright blue-white 'pipe-shaped' object exploded in the air. The sound was heard 200 miles away. In London, the afterglow was bright enough to read a paper at night. Shock waves were recorded all around the world.

Today, nearly 80 years later, nobody knows what caused the explosion; a small comet, a tiny black hole, particles of anti-matter or, perhaps, a crashing alien spaceship?



Map showing the flight path of the cosmic object as reconstructed from eye-witness testimony. Felix Zigel and other space experts agree that, prior to exploding, the object changed direction over the Stony Tunguska region of Siberia, which adds to the mystery.

Vast areas of forest were flattened by the blast wave.



Suggested Reading List

For those who would like to pursue their interest in 'the unexplained', the following books may prove useful:

*Incredible Phenomena—
'The Unexplained File'*
Edited by Peter Brooksmith
(Published by Orbis 1984)

The Complete Books of Charles Fort
(Published by Dover 1974)

'Phenomena'—A Book of Wonders
by Robert Rickard and John Michell
(Published by Thames & Hudson 1977)

Photographs of the Unknown
by Robert Rickard and Richard Kelly
(Published by New English Library 1981)

Living Wonders—Curiosities of the Animal World
by Robert Rickard and John Michell
(Published by Thames & Hudson 1982)

Alien Animals
by Janet and Colin Bord
(Published by Granada 1985)

Ancient Mysteries of Britain
by Janet & Colin Bord
(Published by Grafton 1986)

Mysteries of the Unexplained
(Published by Reader's Digest 1982)

Arthur C Clarke's Mysterious World
(Published by Collins 1980)

The Encyclopaedia of UFO's
by Ronald Story
(Published by New English Library 1980)

The UFO Handbook
by Allan Hendry
(Published by Sphere 1980)

Pathways to the Gods
by Tony Morrison
(Published by Michael Russell Publishing Ltd.)

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by the following sources of illustrations in this album:

Front Cover:
Main illustration – Tony Blythe;
Earth from Space – Robert Harding Picture Library

Inside Front Cover:
Portrait of Lord Hunt – Derek Seddon

Inside Pages (alphabetical order):
Aldus Archive – p 17; APRO – p 19; Janet & Colin Bord – p 2; Tony Blythe – pp 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 21, 23, 24; Brotherton Collection – p 15; British Society for the Turin Shroud – p 10; Fortean Picture Library – pp 4, 6, 18, 22; Robert Harding Picture Library – p 8; Illustrated London News Picture Library – pp 3,15; Keystone – p 14; Mary Evans Picture Library – pp 8, 9, 19, 20, 23; Tony Morrison – pp 8, 11; Natural Science Photos – p 16; Photri Inc – p 5; Sandra Mansi/Frank Spooner – p 7; Seaphot/Planet Earth Pictures – p 16; SovFoto – p 24; Tauyo Gyogyo Kaisha – p 6; Topham Picture Library – p 13.

Back Cover
Painting of Loch Ness Monsters by Sir Peter Scott. This original painting is the property of David Guthrie-James and is on display at his home, Torosay Castle, Isle of Mull.


Unexplained mysteries
of the world